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THE MISSOURI COMPROMISES

AND

PRESIDENTIAL POLITICS

1820-1825

FROM THE

LETTERS OF WILLIAM PLUMER, JUNIOR

REPRESENTATIVE FROM NEW HAMPSHIRE

EDITED BY

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UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

MISSOURI HISTORICAL SOCIETY

St. Louis, 1926

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PREFACE

In the summer of 1916 a search for a missing part of the diary of Senator William Plumer led me to the State Library at Concord, New Hampshire. Here, in a vaulted room, the missing manuscript was found and was later incorporated in my edition of William Plumer's *Memorandum of Proceedings in the United States Senate, 1803-1807*. On the shelves lining this room were numerous bundles of other Plumer manuscripts. A hasty survey of several of these bundles resulted in a determination to return at a later date for a more careful examination. The World War and consequent events prevented pursuit of this earlier discovery until the summer of 1924.

It had been my intention to edit some of the letters of Senator Plumer, but my interest was turned to the letters of his son. While there are many of the elder Plumer's letters in the State Library at Concord, a still greater number are in the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress, and hence more accessible to scholars. Extracts from some of these letters have been published in William Plumer Junior's *Life of William Plumer*. A brief record of the life and historical collections of Senator Plumer may be found in the preface to William Plumer's *Memorandum,* already noted.

William Plumer Junior was born at Epping, New Hampshire, February 9, 1789. He attended Phillips Exeter Academy and entered Harvard in 1805. He was graduated with the class of 1809 and returned to Cambridge in 1812

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to take his second degree, delivering on that occasion the English oration. His life was devoted to public service and to literature. In the latter field he wrote and printed several collections of poems and commenced a history of the War of 1812, which, however, was never completed. He wrote and received many letters, numbering among his correspondents John Quincy Adams, Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, Edward Everett and the political philosopher, Jeremy Bentham. Letters from all these men are in the State Library at Concord.

The younger Plumer held numerous state and national offices. In the summer of 1816 he was appointed commissioner of loans for New Hampshire but the office was abolished seventeen months later. In 1818 he was elected to the state legislature and in 1819 to the house of representatives at Washington. He served in congress from 1819 to 1825. In 1824 the New Hampshire senate chose Plumer United States senator but the lower house made no choice, and in the next legislature Plumer was passed over for another candidate. In 1827 and 1828 he was a member of the New Hampshire senate. He received a commission as district attorney for New Hampshire from President John Quincy Adams in 1827. After this date, Plumer led a more retired life but served frequently on state commissions and boards. One of his last public services was as a member of the state constitutional convention of 1850. He died at Epping, September 8, 1854.

It is with the period of Plumer's membership in the house of representatives that we are here primarily concerned. The years 1819 to 1825 were notable ones, covering as they do the struggle over the Missouri Compromises, the reorganization of party nominating machinery and the

beginning of the realignment of political parties. The story of these important events is graphically told in the letters which Plumer wrote to his father. The elder Plumer had been a United States senator and governor of his state, and it is to his keen interest in events at Washington that we are indebted to the younger Plumer for the frequent and lengthy letters which he wrote during the sessions of congress. Unless otherwise noted all the letters reproduced were addressed to William Plumer, Sr. Although they contain much which must be discounted as political gossip, they add greatly to our information on what was transpiring behind the scenes at Washington. A close friend of Adams and acquainted with Clay, Calhoun and Crawford, not to mention many lesser lights, Plumer was in a position to gather his facts at first hand. It is particularly interesting to check his reports of conversations with John Quincy Adams against the accounts which appear in Adams's *Memoirs*. Several of the most interesting of these conversations were not reported at all by Adams, a fact which renders Plumer's record all the more valuable. To my knowledge these letters have not been used in any previous publication, except in part as a basis for my article on "The Presidential Election of 1824-5", in the *Political Science Quarterly,* XL, 384-403.

Division of the subject matter into two parts would seem to add rather than detract from the value of the book. Only a few of the letters overlap so there is little break in chronological sequence because of this division. The close relationship between the Missouri question and presidential politics of the period immediately following is too obvious to need special emphasis here; indeed, if any were required, it would be found in the pages which follow.

Some of Plumer's letters which were not pertinent to the topics under discussion have been omitted, as have parts of particular letters otherwise reproduced. The original text has been followed as closely as possible, even to spelling and punctuation. Only those portions of the letters which deal with public affairs have been included. The number and length of footnotes is always a vexatious problem. The policy attempted here has been to supply enough notes to clarify the text without annotating it "almost to death", to borrow a phrase from Dr. J. Franklin Jameson.

The publication of this volume and others which will follow it was made possible by the establishment of a fund donated by William Keeney Bixby, the President of the Missouri Historical Society. Thanks are due to him and to the other members of the Board of Trustees of the Society. The Board is composed of the following members:

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I am under a debt of gratitude to the staff of the State Library at Concord for many courtesies, and to Professor Thomas Maitland Marshall, Secretary of the Missouri Historical Society and editor of its series of publications. My wife rendered invaluable service in the arduous task of copying the manuscript and in proof-reading.

Everett Somerville Brown

Ann Arbor, Michigan
November 2, 1925

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PART I

The Missouri Compromises

1820-1821

THE MISSOURI COMPROMISES

LETTERS OF WILLIAM PLUMER, JR. TO HIS FATHER.

WASHINGTON January 30th 1820

DEAR FATHER,

. . . . . .

The subject which now engages all our attention, & indeed has for the whole of the session, to the exclusion of almost everything else, is the Missouri bill[1] — It has been discussed with great ability in the Senate, particularly by Mr. Pinkney[2] & by Mr. Burrel[3] — Pinkney's speech is extolled by his friends to the skies — I heard the greater part of it — & I must confess that it fell infinitely below my

[1] The question of the admission of Missouri into the Union was first raised in the Fifteenth Congress when, on March 16, 1818, John Scott, the delegate from Missouri Territory, presented a petition praying for statehood. The subject was under discussion at various times during the two sessions of the Fifteenth Congress but no definite action was taken. On December 8, 1819, two days after the assembling of the Sixteenth Congress, Scott's memorial asking for the admission of Missouri was referred to a select committee and, as Plumer states, this question became the predominating one of the session. For a brief summary of the subject during these early stages see James A. Woodburn, "The Historical Significance of the Missouri Compromise", American Historical Association, *Annual Report, 1893*, pp. 251 ff. For public opinion in Missouri see Frank H. Hodder, "Side Lights on the Missouri Compromises," *ibid., 1909*, pp. 153-161; H. A. Trexler, "Slavery in Missouri, 1804-1865," Johns Hopkins University, *Studies in Historical and Political Science*, XXXII, especially chapter IV; and Floyd C. Shoemaker, *Missouri's Struggle for Statehood 1804-1821*. A brief treatment of the latter subject will also be found in Louis Houck, *History of Missouri*, III, 243-272.

[2] Senator William Pinkney of Maryland took the floor on Friday, January 21, 1820, but owing to adjournment of the senate, did not con-

expectations in every respect — As a public speaker, his manner appears to me very bad — He is alternately loud & low, like some of our methodist preachers, impetuous, theatrical, & overbearing — His language however is elegant, forcible, & commanding — & I have no doubt his speach will read much better than it appeared when delivered. As to his arguments, I hardly dare give an opinion respecting them. To those who are opposed to the restriction, they appeared unanswerable — that is to say — he succeeded perfectly in convincing those who were before of his opinion — But to me, they appeared perfectly inconclusive. — It was throughout the speach of an able *lawyer,* & I could not help thinking, all the time, that he might, with equal ease, have argued the other side quite as well, &, I have no doubt, much better — He was replied to, by Mr Otis,[4] who has come round to the right side, in a very handsome, & pretty able speech — The debate in the Senate still continues, & probably will for another week — It is not known whether Mr. King[5] will take the floor in this question — There is a very general wish to see him in opposition to Mr. Pinkney — In our House, the debate on the main

clude his speech until Monday, January 24. This speech is not reported in the *Annals of Congress*, because the reporter was indisposed. See *Niles' Register*, XVII, 434. The first address by Pinkney on the Missouri question reported in full was delivered February 15. See *Annals of Congress*, 16 Congress, 1 Session, I, 390-417.

[3] Senator James Burrill, Jr., of Rhode Island. See *ibid.*, 94-97, 209-219, where two of Burrills' speeches are reported.

[4] Senator Harrison Gray Otis of Massachusetts. See *ibid.*, 237-255. For an earlier speech by Otis, see *ibid.*, 108-114. Otis' stand on the Missouri question is traced in S. E. Morison, *Harrison Gray Otis*, II, 214-233.

[5] Senator Rufus King of New York. King made the anticipated reply on February 13. See footnote 23, below. An interesting comparison of the oratorical styles of King and Pinkney is found in John Adams Dix, *Memoirs* (Morgan Dix, compiler), I, 60-61.

question commenced on Thursday,[6] after two or three days spent in preliminary skirmishes — How long it will continue, it is impossible to tell — but I think not less than two or three weeks — The debate was opened by a pretty good speach in favour of the restriction, by the mover of it, Mr. Taylor[7] of New York — He was followed by Mr. Holmes[8] in a silly speech of a day & a half against the motion — ; & when we last adjourned, General Smyth[9] of Virginia, of proclamation memory, had possession of the floor, & will probably occupy another day — He is a man of some talents, of great industry, & much research — & will, I have no doubt, make a much abler speech than that of Holmes — There are at least twenty members who are impatient to speak next — Clay[10] or Randolph[11] will probably be the next — The ablest speech on our side will, I think, be made by Mr. Sergeant[12] of Philadelphia — but the great speekers are almost all in the other side of the House — I am urged by several of my friends to make a speech on this occasion, & I should like much to do it, (for there never was a better subject) if I thought myself equal to it — But among so many men of the very first talents, & on a subject so thoroughly canvassed, it is not easy, if it be possible, for a young man & a new member, to throw any

[6] January 27, 1820. See *Annals of Congress*, 16 Cong., 1 Sess., I, 949.

[7] John W. Taylor, later elected speaker, November 15, 1820, to succeed Henry Clay. For Taylor's speech, see *ibid.*, 950-966.

[8] John Holmes of Massachusetts. *Ibid.*, 966-990, 992.

[9] Alexander Smyth. *Ibid.*, 992-1021, 1023. The story of Smyth's proclamations while brigadier-general during the War of 1812 is related in McMaster, *History of the People of the United States*, IV, 13-16. Texts of the proclamations were printed in *Niles' Register*, III, 203, 216-217.

[10] Henry Clay of Kentucky, speaker of the house.

[11] John Randolph of Virginia.

[12] John Sergeant, candidate for vice-president in 1832.

light on the subject, or say anything new or original in relation to it — I believe we shall finally have a small majority — perhaps about six or eight — I hope, even more — . . .

WASHINGTON February 5th 1820

DEAR FATHER,

. . . . . .

We are still so completely engrossed with the Missouri question as to be able to attend to nothing else — How it will end it is impossible to foresee—A compromise is much talked of in the Senate & by many in our House — The opponents of restriction see that they are likely not to succeed, & many of them are willing to give up the rest of the territories, if we will allow of Slavery in Missouri & Arcansaw — But in my opinion our true policy is to fight the first battle at the water's edge, & if repulsed there, to make our next stand as near as possible to the former — In other words, I would not yield Missouri, if it can be preserved — & if this is lost, I would still hold Arcansaw & all the rest — The debate has in general been managed with some moderation & coolness in our House, considering the very great excitement which is everywhere felt on this subject — General Smyth made a speach of two days to empty seats,[13] there being not half the time a quorum present — Mr Randolph[14] followed in a speach of nearly equal length — He was heard indeed with some attention — but in the opinion of all his friends, he completely & miserably failed — It is very apparent, that whatever he might formerly

[13] See footnote 9, above.

[14] Randolph spoke for three hours on February 2, but his speech is not reported in the *Annals of Congress*, 16 Cong., 1 Sess., I, 1046. *Cf.* W. C. Bruce, *John Randolph of Roanoke*, I, 448.

have been, he is no longer equal to the discussion of any subject which requires reasoning, a connected train of thought, & a steady & continued investigation — On light topics he is interesting; his sarcasm is still biting; his wit, his fancy, & his repertees are often brilliant, & his singularities amuse when he has nothing else to recommend him — He is good at light firing, & sends his buck-shot about him with no inconsiderable effect — but he wants strength to poise the heavier weapons of war, & can neither direct or discharge the artillery of reason — He was followed by Mr. Hardin[15] of Kentucky — a man of a strong mind, but of rough & uncultivated intellect & manners — This is the man whom Randolph once described, not inaptly, by saying that he "fought with a cleaver, or kitchen knife, sharpened upon a brick-bat"! He made an able speech — All these have been upon one side & so eager has been the competition to obtain the floor, that a modest man would hardly dare to rise among such a mob — Beside those whom I have mentioned, several other of less note have delivered their sentiments — Judge Hemphill[16] of Pennsylvania, who must I think have been in Congress with you, spoke about an hour in favour of the restriction, & will resume the subject on monday — He is a man of handsome talents, & has done more justice to the subject than any person who has yet spoken on our side of the question — He will probably be followed by Mr Clay — (Mr Clay, by the way, wished me to make his respects to you) & in a week or ten days

[15] Benjamin Hardin. See *Annals of Congress*, 16 Cong., 1 Sess., I, 1069-1091.

[16] Joseph Hemphill. *Ibid.*, 1114-1136, 1138. Hemphill was a member of the house during the Seventh Congress (December, 1801-March, 1803). The elder Plumer was elected senator from New Hampshire in place of James Sheafe, and took his seat December 6, 1802.

more I think we shall reach the end of this debate — There will however be another, but shorter discussion, when the bill comes from the senate on the question of seperating Maine from Missouri — & another, after that, on the subject of slavery in the territories — It is uncertain whether I shall make a speach on this subject — I have paid some attention to it — but it is impossible to say anything new on the question, & I should not be able to say with better effect, or in more forcible manner, what has already been repeatedly said by others. . . .

WASHINGTON February 12th 1820

DEAR FATHER,

. . . . . .

The Missouri bill is still before Congress — & in fact occupies the whole of our time & attention — Since I wrote you last, we have had in our House, several very able speeches — Judge Hemphill was followed by Mr Clay in a speech which occupied one whole sitting[17] — His mode of speaking is very forcible — He fixes the attention by his earnest & emphatic tones & gestures — the last of which are however far from being graceful — He frequently shrugs up his shoulders, & twists his features, & indeed his whole body in the most dreadful scowls & contortions — Yet the whole seems natural; there is no appearance of acting, or theatrical effect — & you see in every motion & word the uncontrolled expression of violent feelings, & the result of a powerful but irregular mind — If there is any passion which he expresses with greater force than another

[17] Clay spoke for four hours on February 8, but his speech is not reported in the *Annals of Congress* of that date.

it is contempt — He was succeeded by Mr. Sergeant,[18] who delivered the best speech, (I think) taking all things together, that I ever heard — In argument, it was unanswerable; & the manner, though not so forcible & impetuous as Clay's was better suited to the clear & calm discussion of a great constitutional question like the present. Sergeant was followed by Barbour[19] — who is, of all men in the House, the most subtle & accute logician — He is never better pleased than when splitting hairs & indulging in nice meti-physical distinctions — He is however a very able man, & discussed this question with much skill & accuteness — Today was spent in hearing, or rather in not hearing, Mr Pindell[20] — a good lawyer, but an unpleasant speaker — Yesterday Mr. Gross[21] & Anderson[22] occupied the floor — In the Senate, Mr King[23] delivered a speech which was said to be very able, & which the Southern people did not much relish on account of the manner in which he spoke of Slavery as being not only an evil, but a crime & an injustice. I heard the conclusion of it only — He has very little of the orator in his manner; yet there is something which fixes the attention, so that no man is better heard — There is no appearance of the debates coming to a close — & I am inclined to think that this subject, with others growing out of it, will continue to occupy our atten-

[18] *Annals of Congress*, 16 Cong., 1 Sess., I, 1172-1218.

[19] Philip P. Barbour of Virginia. *Ibid.*, 1218-1242.

[20] James Pindall of Virginia. *Ibid.*, 1265-II, 1289.

[21] Ezra C. Gross. *Ibid.*, I, 1242-1253.

[22] Richard C. Anderson, Jr., of Kentucky. *Ibid.*, 1253-1264.

[23] Senator King's speech is not reported in the *Annals of Congress* of February 11. A summary of the speech will be found in *The Life and Correspondence of Rufus King* (C. R. King. ed.), VI, 276-278. The substance of two earlier speeches on the Missouri question is given in *ibid.*, 690-703, and in *Niles' Register*, XVII, 215-221.

tion till towards the end of February — This is indeed an unprecedented length of time — but the subject is one of immense interest & importance — & on general principles, I think nothing is lost by debate. Congress passes too many laws every session — & I am clearly of opinion that the more we talk, & the less we do, the better it is for the nation — There are however many interesting subjects which must be acted upon — & the old members begin to talk of staying here till the first of May — I hope not —

This Missouri question has given rise to some movements in Virginia which show in how little estimation the President is held in his native state — They are about to select candidates for electors; & it is there, & here, distinctly anounced, that, if Mr. Monroe consents to the bill which, it is thought, will pass both Houses, restricting slavery in the territories, they will look out for a new president. Should the bill pass, it will place the President in a sad dilemma. If he rejects it, acting under his threat he loses all the north, where his best friends now are — if he approves it, he is at open war with Virginia & the South.[24] I think it probable however that this violence is, in part at least, intended to alarm Congress, as well as influence the President — At any rate, there is much confusion & anxiety at the palace — &, of all the cabinet, Mr Adams[25] alone feels easy, or is likely to gain anything by this

[24] The action of the Virginia legislature is reported in *Niles' Register*, XVII, 425, 441. See also the letters to Senator James Barbour of Virginia, published in the William and Mary College, *Quarterly*, X, 5-24, especially p. 11.

[25] John Quincy Adams, secretary of state. Lewis Williams, representative from North Carolina, wrote to Thomas Ruffin, December 22, 1821: "During the pendency of the Missouri Question, while it was doubtful whether the influence and feeling excited by it might not be carried into the next election of President, John Q. Adams and his friends

affair — He is open & explicit in his opinions, & acts on this occasion with his characteristic frankness —

WASHINGTON February 20th 1820

DEAR FATHER,

. . . . . .

We are all still engaged, as deeply as ever, in the Missouri business, which seems to be almost interminable — The senate has sent down what they call a compromise — that is, they have connected Maine & Missouri, without restriction, & have agreed to exclude Slavery from the territory north of 36½, which would leave it in Missouri, Arcansaw, & one other state[26] — We shall seperate the two bills in our House by a considerable majority, & I think there will finally be found in the senate a majority of one or two for receeding from their amendment — but this is uncertain — & many believe that neither state will be admitted this session — Many of the Southern members openly avow their intention — They say they have now an equality in the Senate, eleven slave holding, & eleven free state, & they are determined not to admit a free state without bringing in at the same time a slave state to preserve the balance — They also throw out many threats, & talk loudly of seperation — Governor Pinckney[27] of South Carolina, in a very violent speech in our House, said that "if this course was persisted in, the Southern States *must* & *would* dissolve the Union" — The Virginians talk in the same style — & Mr Clay declares that he will go home &

were very much elated." Thomas Ruffin, *Papers*, I, 258, North Carolina Historical Commission, *Publications*.

[26] See *Annals of Congress*, 16 Cong., 1 Sess., II, 1403-1404, 1405-1406.

[27] Charles Pinckney. *Ibid.*, 1310-1329.

raise troops, if necessary, to defend the people of Missouri — But this is all talk, intended to frighten us out of our purpose — & is so understood — There is however much said about a compromise — & I am afraid that there will [be] some flinching on this subject. — We have now a clear majority — & nothing but firmness is necessary to give us all the success, on which we have ever calculated, that is to say, getting Maine in, & keeping Missouri out. — We have had many speeches in our House since I wrote you last — but none very able, except that of Mr Lowndes[28] — I was indiscreet enough to take the floor immediately after him — & should have spoken yesterday; but the bill from the senate occupied the day, & we did not go into committee of the whole — I shall therefore have to make my first speech on Monday[29] — I have matter enough for a good one. . . . I hope we shall not much longer be employed on this subject — The discussion has thus far been attended with many obvious advantages — much new light has been elicited — but the public will, I fear, if Congress does not, grow tired of it, if longer continued. . . .

Washington February 26th 1820

Dear father,

. . . . . .

The conduct of Parrott,[30] to which you refer, is very surprising — & the pains which he has taken to misrepresent the question, & to excite prejudices in New Hampshire by representing it as a federal measure & calling upon the Republicans of the north not to desert their southern

[28] William Lowndes of South Carolina. This speech is not reported in the *Annals of Congress*, 16 Cong., 1 Sess., II, 1405.

[29] February 21. The text of the speech is given in *ibid.*, 1412-1440.

[30] Senator John F. Parrott of New Hampshire.

friends, is in my opinion altogether unjustifiable — Such representations however & the influence of the Palace, which after all is heavier than the Capitol, have produced a considerable change here — &, if, at first we succeed in carrying the restriction through our house, we shall in the end want firmness to support it — & the affair will end in a compromise — That this will be the case I have little or no doubt — I have seen a good deal of flinching for a fortnight past — & in the end we shall not be able to stand fire — Something however will be gained by the restriction on the territories, though, if annexed to Missouri, without restriction, I shall be obliged to vote against both — The bargaining of which you speak, is apparent in too many instances — & if we fail, it will be by a bargain between the southern & western members & the members from Maine — Two or three of them at least will finally yield to this infamous & corrupt motive. . . .

Washington March 4th 1820.

Dear father,

. . . . . .

We have after all our labour & our exertions lost the restriction on the Missouri bill[31] — This event I had foreseen for three weeks past, though I mentioned it to no one whom I thought it would discourage — The Southern & Western people talked so much, threatened so loudly, &

[31] The restriction here referred to was the prohibition of slavery in Missouri. In its place was substituted the famous compromise that, excepting Missouri, in all the territory ceded by France to the United States, under the name of Louisiana, which lay north of thirty-six degrees and thirty minutes north latitude slavery should be forever prohibited. The report of the conference committee is given in the *Annals of Congress*, 16 Cong., 1 Sess., II, 1576-1577.

predicted such dreadful consequences from the success of our measures, that they fairly frightened our weak-minded members into an abandonment of this most important & salutary measure. About ten members, whose names you will see in the papers, after having voted with us through all the previous stages of the business flinched at last & gave way when the real "tug of war" came — Some of them bolted, & others voted against us.[32] . . . But though we have lost Missouri, we have imposed the restriction on the territories — & this in my opinion is a great point gained — It is worth infinitely more than all the trouble it has cost us, the time we have spent, & the unkind feelings which have been excited — You can hardly conceive of the rage & fury which prevailed here on this subject — It was seriously proposed by the leading men on the other side, Lowndes, Clay, Barbour, & others, if we succeeded, that they would merely pass the appropriation bills, & then adjourn, to consult their constituents whether they should ever come back again! A dissolution of the Union was spoken of as certain, & hardly to be regretted — I for one was not much moved by these threats; yet to tell the truth there was some danger, & considering that it was certain that the Senate would not yield, perhaps we ought not much to regret, though I for one cannot help regretting, that it ended in a compromise[33] — That there should be any

[32] For the vote on concurring with the senate in striking out of the bill the slavery restriction on Missouri, see *Annals of Congress*, 16 Cong., 1 Sess., II, 1586-1587. The vote on the compromise measure is in *ibid.*, 1587-1588.

[33] Plumer voted against striking out the slavery restriction but, having lost this, he voted for the compromise clause.

On the threat of the Southerners to go home, see the reported conversation between Clay and Randolph in Ben. Perley Poore, *Reminiscenses*, I, 210-211; also quoted in W. C. Bruce, *John Randolph of Roanoke*, I, 449. An interesting statement of the attitude of the South is given in

diversity of opinion in our part of the country is what more surprises me than either the union or the zeal & passion of the slave-holders — They came with the greatest reluctance even to the compromise — & would have refused this, if it had been in their power — but they were compelled to surrender this, or lose the whole. The President will, no doubt, sign the bill, though many think it will shake his popularity very much, particularly in Virginia — Few members from that state voted for the compromise. . . .

House of Representatives April 7th 1820

Dear father,

I do not know that I ever mentioned to you the opinions

a letter from Senator Montford Stokes of North Carolina to Governor John Branch of the same state, February 27, 1820. A typed copy is in the possession of the Missouri Historical Society from the original owned by Mr. John H. Gundlach of St. Louis. I am indebted to Professor Ulrich B. Phillips for the copy of the letter, which here follows:

> The question of compelling the people of Missouri to form their constitution so as forever to prevent the introduction of slavery in that State, has occupied both Houses of Congress for some weeks, and has not yet been settled. You have seen and will hereafter see, volumes of speeches on the subject, most of which (not having been listened to in either House) are intended for home consumption. . . . This all important contest, which is agitating the people of the United States in a great degree everywhere . . . in some of the Northern states has produced a delirium and phrensy approaching to madness. . . . Those who are opposed to this unconstitutional restriction upon the people of Missouri, cannot and do not expect that Missouri will be admitted into the Union without the restriction, unless some concession or agreement shall take place excluding slavery from a portion of the west territory beyond the Mississippi. This is not mere opinion: it has been ascertained by several votes in the House of Representatives that a considerable majority of that body are in favor of restriction as to all the country purchased from France under the name of Louisiana. It is useless to examine at this time whether this is a correct principle or not. . . . All that we from the slave holding states can do at present is to rescue from the rapacious grasp of these consciencious fanatics a considerable portion of Louisiana, including all the settled parts of that extensive country. I can see no means either now or hereafter, of accomplishing this object but by consenting that slavery may be prohibited in the northern portion of the Louisiana purchase.

of the cabinet on the Missouri question — The President[34] & Mr Crawford[35] were of course against doing any thing on the subject whatever. Mr Thompson's[36] opinions were not known for some time — He kept back & took no part for some time — but at last came out in favour of the Compromise — It since appears that the Bucktails or Tompkinites, were in general lukewarm on this subject, & many of them opposed to the restriction. Mr Adams declared himself at first decidedly in favour of the Restriction — & this was pretty generally understood to be his opinion to the end — But is not correct — About a week before the final question was taken, I called upon him one morning at his house, & took occasion to ask him his opinion on what we ought to do — He said that he had not the least doubt of the Constitutional power of Congress to impose the restriction; but that he was satisfied we could not enforce it in this case; that the people of Missouri were against it; & that they would be supported, in any course they might adopt, by one half the states in the Union; that the employment of slaves was found so profitable in new countries, that it would be difficult to keep them out even of Indiana & Illinois — & that there was very little hope of saving any thing further south — He was therefore in favour of the compromise[37] — I was sorry to hear these opinions from him, & I took care

[34] Monroe was urged by friends to veto the Missouri bill and even drafted such a message. See *Congressional Globe*, 30 Cong., 2 Sess., Appendix, 64-67. His concern over the question is expressed in his letters to Jefferson. James Monroe, *Writings* (S. M. Hamilton, ed.), VI, 114-116, 121-122.

[35] William H. Crawford of Georgia, secretary of the treasury.

[36] Smith Thompson of New York, secretary of the navy.

[37] *Cf.* John Quincy Adams, *Memoirs*, IV, 529-530, where under date of February 23, 1820, Adams gives his version of this conversation, which, in the main, is the same as that told by Plumer.

not to make them known where they would do any harm — I have very little doubt that the President & his cabinet consulted on the subject, & that this opinion was the result of their meeting[38] — I have never heard what were the opinions of the Attorney General[39] — He no doubt concurred with the rest —

In a conversation which I had with Robert G. Harper,[40] he said he had no doubt of the constitutional power of Congress, but thought it inexpedient to exert it in this case — Mr. Gaston[41] of North Caroline expressed nearly the same opinion — I have, in fact, no doubt that there are as many in the slave holding states who acknowledge the power of Congress, on this subject, as there are in the free states who deny it —

There is to be a caucus tonight — The real object is to nominate Mr Clay for Vice President — It is thought that Tompkins[42] will be chosen Governor of New York — But I think little or nothing will be done — An attempt will be made to adjourn *sine die* — If this fails, I think the better course will be for those who wish to prevent a nomination to secede — I begin to suspect that Clay's pretended resignation was intended principally for this object; & that if he is not Vice President, he will continue to be Speaker of the

[38] A cabinet discussion of the Missouri bill was held March 3. John Quincy Adams, *Memoirs*, V, 5-12.

[39] William Wirt of Virginia. For Wirt's views, see *ibid.*

[40] Robert Goodloe Harper was a representative from South Carolina to the Third, Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Congresses, and was elected senator from Maryland in 1816, but resigned the same year. He was noted as a lawyer.

[41] William Gaston, representative from North Carolina to the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Congresses and prominent in judicial and political circles in his state.

[42] Daniel D. Tompkins, vice-president; re-elected in 1821.

House — If he were chosen to the former office, it would be a stepping stone to the Presidency — With his popular talents, & the advantage of being here on the spot, he would stand a very good chance of being nominated, at the end of the next four years[43] —

WASHINGTON November 23d 1820

DEAR FATHER,

. . . . . .

We have just received from Mr. Lowndes a detailed report on the Missouri Constitution[44] — It is in favour of the admission of Missouri — It has been referred to a committee of the whole — & will not probably be acted upon this week. . . .

Mr. Russ[45] of Connecticut told me, that in passing through Philadelphia on his way here, he saw Mr. Cheves,[46] of South Carolina, President of the U. S. Bank — that, in speaking of the Missouri constitution, he told him that, while in the legislature of his native state, it was proposed to pass a law prohibiting free blacks from living in the state; but that he was clearly of opinion that such a law would be in violation of the constitution of the United States, & that the committee, of which he was a member, to whom it was referred, reported against it, & it was rejected — Here is the opinion, given under very favourable

[43] For the outcome of this caucus see Plumer's letter of April 10, 1820, below.

The call for this caucus was published in the *National Intelligencer*, from which it was printed in *Niles' Register*, XVIII, 97. Its results are given in *ibid.*, 113.

[44] For the report, see *Annals of Congress*, 16 Cong., 2 Sess., 453-455.

[45] John Russ, representative from Connecticut.

[46] Langdon Cheves, president of the bank from 1819 to 1823.

circumstances, as it respects impartiality, of an eminent lawyer & politician of the south, which bears directly upon the question before us.[47] Indeed I have hardly heard a single individual justify this provision in the Constitution of Missouri. Yet it is not easy to say what ought to be done in this case. She has thrown off her territorial government, erected herself, with our permission into a state, chosen her state officers, ratified the contract which we offered her; & if we refuse her admission into the Union, she seems in the condition of an independent State, freed from our control, & on equal terms with us — Yet this was evidently not the intention of Congress in passing the law of the last session — Difficulties exist on every side — yet one thing is clear that it can never be our duty to sanction, by our act, Slavery in Missouri, or to lend any facilities to its extension, much less to give effect to a constitution which directly violates that of the Union. Whatever is done, I hope there will be no long debate; for of this the public would soon become weary, & from mere disgust, be in some danger of turning against us — The provision respecting free blacks was opposed by Scott,[48] their delegate, & Barton,[49] President of the convention, whom they have chosen one of their Senators. Among other things, their right to take part in the Presidential Election may produce some embarrassment — They have chosen Electors — Suppose the Senate, should admit their Senators, &

[47] The provision in the proposed constitution of Missouri directing the legislature to pass such laws as might be necessary to prohibit free blacks from residing within the state.

[48] John Scott, delegate to Congress; later representative to the Seventeenth, Eighteenth and Nineteenth Congresses.

[49] David Barton, who later served as senator from Missouri from December 3, 1821 to March 3, 1831.

the House refuse their Representative — or that the two Houses should disagree respecting their Electoral votes, who is to decide?[50] All these questions, & others of a difficult nature, will be started to alarm the timid, & obtain votes for Missouri.

WASHINGTON December 3d 1820.

DEAR FATHER,

. . . . . .

The Missouri constitution is to be discussed on Wednesday next — I do not think the debate will be a long one — The ground is considerably narrowed — The act of the last session, if constitutional, (that is, if the constitution gives the power to Congress of admitting a state into the Union from without the original territory of the States, a question which it seems now almost too late to raise,)[51] promises admission to Missouri upon certain conditions — If she has complied with those conditions, the act seems binding on us — One of those conditions was that her constitution should not be repugnant to the constitution of the United

[50] Provision for the counting of disputed electoral votes was made in a constitutional amendment introduced in 1798 by Senator Humphrey Marshall of Kentucky. Herman V. Ames, *"Proposed Amendments to the Constitution of the United States,"* American Historical Association, *Annual Report, 1896*, II, 117.

Possible difficulties arising from disputed electoral returns were pointed out by Plumer's father in the presidential election of 1804. See William Plumer, *Memorandum of Proceedings in the United States Senate, 1803-1807* (Everett S. Brown, ed.), 286.

The question was not settled until the disputed election of 1876 led to the passage of the Electoral Count Act of 1887. U. S., *Statutes at Large*, XXIV, 373-375. Even that act has not obviated all possible complications.

[51] This question was first raised with respect to the state of Louisiana. See Everett S. Brown, *The Constitutional History of the Louisiana Purchase, 1803-1812*, for a detailed discussion of the subject.

States; & if no such repugnance can be discovered, are we not bound to admit her? If so, the question is, not whether slavery shall be allowed, but whether on this or any other point her constitution is repugnant to that which we have sworn to support — That it is, seems to me to admit of no doubt — It is indeed even conceded by some who yet advocate her admission, & say we ought to leave the Judiciary to decide the question. There is another view of the subject, which if correct, opens the whole discussion as wide as it was at the last session — The act under which Missouri claims, contained conditions to be performed by her & by us, — she has failed to perform her part — she cannot therefore call upon us to perform ours — so that the act of the last session is in effect void — Missouri is still a territory — & if we again grant her leave to form a constitution & state government, it may be upon such terms as we chose to propose, including that of the last session respecting slavery — I do not however think the Members in general will take this view of the subject — but content themselves with objecting to the clause respecting free blacks — The subject no longer excites the same interest it did last year; & I am even doubtful whether the majority will not be in favour of admitting Missouri with some declaratory proviso, as to the meaning of this clause, which will in fact amount to nothing, but serve merely as a salve to tender consciences.[52] . . .

Washington December 9th 1820

Dear father,

The debate on the Missouri constitution commenced in both Houses on Wednesday — In our House, Mr Lowndes

[52] Plumer here showed himself to be a good judge of the temper of his fellow legislators, as later developments were to prove.

occupied the first day in a speech which, in my opinion, gave up the whole ground — He acknowledged that the clause in question might be & in a certain sense was unconstitutional — but contended that we could not decide the question; but must refer it to the Judiciary — His chief argument was that Missouri was already a State — & her situation in all respects like that of the oldest state in the Union — Yet he admitted the right of Congress to interfere in certain cases; & thus in effect gave up the whole argument[53] —

Thursday was occupied by Sargeant in a Speech of two hours & a half — He placed the whole subject in the strongest point of view, & refuted the arguments of Mr Lowndes with his usual courtesy of manner, but with a force & clearness which stripped away every thing like argument or subtifuge in the case[54] —

He was followed the next day by Mr Storrs of New York[55] — Storrs voted last year against the Restriction — He now votes against the Constitution of Missouri on account of the clause respecting free blacks — & he laboured with much ingenuity to show that his two votes were consistant with each other — It is not certain how he will vote, as he concluded with intimating that some proviso might possibly be adopted which would remove his objection. It is very clear that the Resolve will not pass in its present form — but I fear they will draw off a portion of our strength by some such unmeaning amendment as that introduced by Eaton[56] of the Senate —

[53] See *Annals of Congress*, 16 Cong., 2 Sess., 508-516.
[54] See *ibid.*, 517-531.
[55] Henry R. Storrs. See *ibid.*, 532-543.
[56] On December 6, 1820, Senator John Henry Eaton of Tennessee of-

Storrs was followed by Barbour of Virginia, who argued with his usual ingenuity; but the exigencies of his case forced him to contend, first that there was no such thing as a black or mulattoe citizen in any State of the Union; & secondly that Missouri is at this time a member of this Union[57] —

The question ought now to have been taken — The subject had been ably discussed on both sides by two persons on each — But there were so many who wished to speak, that I fear we shall not get the question short of another week—

December 14.

We have just taken the question on the admission of Missouri on Mr Lowndes resolution, ayes 79, noes 93, majority 14[58] — This is the first trial, & almost all the doubtful men went with us this time — But there are already signs enough of their irresolution — & I have little doubt that we shall come into some unmeaning compromise before it is over —

Washington December 14th 1820

Dear father,

The vote which we gave yesterday rejecting the Missouri resolution gives great trouble to the Southern people —

fered the following proviso to the resolution for the admission into the Union of the state of Missouri:

Provided, That nothing herein contained shall be so construed as to give the assent of Congress to any provision in the constitution of Missouri, if any such there be, which contravenes that clause in the Constitution of the United States, which declares that "the citizens of each State shall be entitled to all privileges and immunities of citizen in the several States." *Ibid.*, 41.

[57] See *ibid.*, 543-554.

[58] The vote was taken on December 13. *Ibid.*, 669-670.

They begin already to talk of dissolving the Union, of admitting the Missouri Senators in the other Branch, & of many other desperate schemes, all intended to operate upon weak nerves, & feeble minds — Finding themselves outnumbered in the House, their object now is to postpone the question, to gain time, & with time to gain strength, to alarm the timorous & convert the wavering — So anxious are they for this delay, that they attempted to adjourn over from today (Thursday) to Monday next. But in this they failed — & if we are wise we shall tomorrow take up the resolve of the Senate, containing Eaton's proviso, & act on it without delay[59] — We are strong now, but every day will take something from our strength — I asked Mr. Lowndes why he wished for delay — After some hesitation he acknowledged that it was to give time for us to cool down, in other words, to divide among ourselves & give up the question — You are excited now, he added, & I think it good policy to wait till the antagonist muscle relaxes — I told him that theirs might perhaps relax as soon as ours — But this is not likely to be the case — They have the advantage of us in that respect. . . .

WASHINGTON January 13th 1821

DEAR FATHER,

. . . . . .

We have spent the two last days with as little profit to ourselves & to the public as can well be imagined — Yesterday was employed in an attempt on the part of the

[59] The senate adjourned until Monday, December 18. *Annals of Congress*, 16 Cong., 2 Sess., 121. The house met on Friday, December 15, but did not take up the Missouri question. *Ibid.*, 672-678.

friends of Missouri to insert in the record of the House the word *State* preceeding Missouri, so as to imply, at least, that we considered her as a state — The same party also moved to insert the word *territory*, but without success — & the house adjourned after a sitting of six hours, having decided no other point than that they would not alter their Journal[60] — I never saw more violence, not even last winter, than was betrayed by Randolph, Archer[61] & Parker[62] of Virginia, Trimble,[63] & some others on this question — Randolph wanted an occasion to vent his spleen on Taylor[64] — & Trimble was provoked because he had been left off of the Financial Committee, where he fancied he made a distinguished figure — & they all felt angry & mortified at their repeated defeats on the Missouri question — At the first vote owing to various causes, they came very near carrying their point — the vote was 76 to 76[65] — But we gained strength at every subsequent vote[66] — This was the first time the New Speaker had been put to the Trial, & he came out of it, in the opinion of all parties, with great honor to

[60] The question arose as a result of the presentation to the house by Lowndes of three memorials from the senate and house of representatives of Missouri concerning the purchase of public lands in Missouri. *Ibid.*, 841. Thomas W. Cobb moved to amend the entry in the *Journal* by inserting, before the word "Missouri," the words "the State of". *Ibid.*, 842.

[61] William S. Archer.

[62] Severn E. Parker.

[63] David Trimble of Kentucky.

[64] John W. Taylor, speaker of the house.

[65] For this vote, see *Annals of Congress*, 16 Cong., 2 Sess., 844-845. The speaker also cast his vote with the nays.

[66] A motion by Archer that the words "the Territory of" be inserted before the word "Missouri" in the entry of the *Journal* under discussion was lost, only four votes being cast in favor of it. *Ibid.*, 852-853. A motion by Henry R. Warfield of Maryland to reconsider the vote on the first motion, to insert the words "the State of" before "Missouri" was defeated by a vote of 77 to 71. *Ibid.*, 853-854. Barbour's motion to amend the

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himself — Though much was said to him personally of an irritating nature, he never lost his temper, nor suffered himself to be encroached upon with impunity — Several points of order were made — & urged with vehemence — Twice his decision was appealed from — but in both cases he explained the rule with such force & clearness that the appeals were withdrawn, though one was taken by Cobb, & the other by Nelson of Virginia, men who think themselves well informed, & who are not apt to surrender an opinion once avowed — I may add here that Taylor answers fully the sanguine expectations of his warmest friends, & that he is generally allowed to be an excellent presiding officer—

On our side but little was said, in this debate — & that little with perfect coolness & good humour — In this respect we had manifestly the advantage — They were angry, divided among themselves, & desperate in their language & conduct —

This morning Reid of Georgia attempted to revive the subject — but after hearing a long speech from him, the House refused by a vote of 96 to 47 to *consider* his propositions.[67] The most prudent men on his own side all voted against him — Indeed many of them considered the course they had taken yesterday as imprudent, & unwise, calculated to answer no useful purpose but on the contrary to irritate & provoke the majority, & thus defeat their own object with respect to Missouri — The whole affair was

entry in the *Journal* by inserting, after the words "public lands," where they first occur, the words "in the late Territory of Missouri" was defeated 79 to 61. *Ibid.*, 856-857. These various motions, with sundry attempted amendments, fully substantiate Plumer's statement that the new speaker, Taylor, was put to a severe test.

[67] Robert R. Reid. On this motion and the vote against it, see *Annals of Congress*, 16 Cong., 2 Sess., 859-863.

unexpected on our side, & I believe without concert on their part — The hot & hasty tempers, & the young men particularly, took the lead, & dragged the rest after them — They want the guidance of such a man as Mr Clay, who, with all his violence & impetuosity, knew better how to control & direct his party, than any man they now have here —

Dr Eustis has given notice that he shall call up his proposition respecting Missouri on Monday next[68] — It will I think be rejected by both sides of the House — but what will follow it is impossible to tell — many think Missouri will not be admitted this session — & that if we can keep her out till the next session the restriction of the last session, will be imposed — I have doubts about this — Eustis will carry enough with him to defeat us on that point — It is unfortunate for us that he is here—He possesses talents (the remains at least of an able man) & he has age, & weight of character — but he wants judgment; & is no longer fit to lead — & does not chose to follow — Such a man, without any bad intentions, is able & likely, to betray the best cause, from mere indiscretion — They get round him, flatter his vanity, & gain his vote. . . . He has made two or three very popular speeches on retrenchment, & economy, & returning to the Republican simplicity of former days — He showed in them more mind than I supposed that he now possessed.

[68] William Eustis of Massachusetts had introduced a resolution, December 19, 1820, providing for the admission of Missouri into the Union on condition that she expunge from her constitution the clause making it the duty of the legislature to prevent free people of color from entering or settling in the state. *Ibid.*, 679. Eustis's resolution was called up on Monday, January 15, 1821 but on his motion, in order that it might not interrupt the discussion of the Army bill, it was referred to a committee of the Whole on the state of the Union. *Ibid.*, 864. On Wednesday, January 24, the resolution was discussed and defeated. *Ibid.*, 942-944.

WASHINGTON January 16th 1821.

DEAR FATHER,

. . . . . .

I think with you that Eustis' proposition ought not to be adopted — & I do not believe that it will be. The southern & western people all declare against it — & those from the free states seem generally inclined to reject it — I have taken some pains to converse with the leading men on our side — & they think we ought to do nothing further this session — Missouri asked leave to form a constitution — we gave it upon certain conditions — She has presented a constitution, which we have declared cannot be accepted by us as a fulfilment of the conditions on which we promised to admit her into the Union — If she wishes admission, she knows on what conditions she can obtain it — Let her either ask leave to call a new convention, or, without applying to us for that purpose, alter her constitution where it is exceptionable — & she will then be admitted — This is probably the best course we can adopt — but I do not think we have force enough to pursue it to the end. It is possible however that I am mistaken — & if so, if nothing is done till the next session, the old question of Restriction will probably be revived, & Missouri may yet be prevented from becoming a slave holding state — But I doubt this, as Congress, as well as the people at large, seem weary of the subject, & wish to see it closed. . . .

WASHINGTON February 2d 1821

DEAR FATHER,

I wish I had time to write you two or three long letters on the proceedings of Congress on the Missouri constitu-

tion, which we have had before us the last eight or ten days — The subject was called up by Mr Clay[69] — & those who were opposed to her admission in the present state of the question, finding it necessary to determine on some definite course, had a meeting to see what that course should be — About twenty of us met — The first question was should we insist at the present session on the Restriction of Slavery — Almost all were opposed to this — some considered the question as settled at the last session — others urged the utter impossibility of carrying it through the Senate, even if it succeeded, which was improbable, in the House — & all agreed that the people at large had become tired of the subject, & wished to see the controversy closed without further delay — It was however generally agreed that we ought to do nothing by which we should even appear to relinquish our former doctrines — Another question which arose in this meeting was whether we should vote for any proposition, which carried with it the idea of admission this session — & it seemed to be the general understanding that no such proposition could be offered which would be free from the objections already urged against the clause respecting free negroes — The meeting broke up with a conviction in the minds of most of those present that we had nothing to do but say *no,* to every proposition which could be made from the other side. It was apparent however that almost everybody was tired of the controversy, & wished in general that Missouri was

[69] Henry Clay took his seat January 16, 1821. *Annals of Congress,* 16 Cong., 2 Sess., 872. On Clay's motion, January 29, the house began discussion of the resolution from the senate, for admitting Missouri into the Union, with a *caveat* against the provision, if one existed, which conflicted with the Constitution of the United States. *Ibid.,* 982. See footnote 56, above, for the full text of this provision.

admitted, or rather that they were free from the responsibility of longer keeping alive this painful controversy —

You will perseive by the News Papers that a multitude of amendments have been proposed to the resolve from the Senate — most of them meaning nothing, & none of them reaching the root of the evil, even if restriction were abandoned — The southern people indeed, before they would vote for any amendment were obliged to convince themselves that it meant nothing — & this was enough to convince us that we ought not to vote for it — In the course of the debate yesterday Mr Sargeant suggested his plan, which was, in substance, not to admit Missouri this session, but to give her, without any act on our part, another year to reform her constitution, & leaving it to the next Congress to say, when she again presented herself for admission whether her constitution was such as to entitle her to that favour[70] — This would be deciding nothing at present, asserting no principles, & giving up none. This idea of bequeathing the controversy to the next Congress was pretty generally disapproved by all parties — though I have no doubt, if it could have been adopted, it would have given us a much better chance than we now have, of bringing Missouri to adopt the restriction —

In the long & animated debates which have taken place on this subject, Mr Clay, who, as usual, takes the lead in favour of Missouri, has assumed a new character — He uses no threats, or abuse — but all is mild, humble, & persuasive — he begs, entreats, adjures, suplicates, & be-

[70] Sergeant's plan is not mentioned in the *Annals of Congress* of February 1, although it is recorded that "the whole day was spent in animated debate, and interesting proceedings." *Ibid.*, 1001. The *House Journal* of this date merely states that the house "again had the state of the Union under consideration, and came to no resolution thereon."

seaches us to have mercy upon the people of Missouri — He is ready to vote for anything, & everything which we may propose, short of restriction, & he knows, such is his language, that we have too much justice, good sense, & good feeling to move again that odious question — The same tone is taken by his followers in general — but there are some among the southern members, who will not go along with him in this course, & who, like Randolph, vote against every proviso — On our side there is also great diversity of opinion at least among a few — One class is in favour of admitting Missouri this session, with a proviso which they think amounts to a repeal of the obnoxious clause — others think that she alone can remove the objection, & consequently propose her introduction at the next or some subsequent session, on condition that she expunges this article from her constitution.

Yesterday & today have been spent in trying the various amendments proposed by Storrs,[71] Foot,[72] Hackley,[73] Moore,[74] & McLaine[75] — which were all rejected. After being five hours in session today, & coming no nearer than at first to any conclusion, Clay, who perceived that in this way Missouri must be rejected, proposed that the resolution from the Senate should be referred to a select committee of thirteen, in hopes that they might agree upon some expedient which should be satisfactory to a majority of the House[76] — This was an artful measure on the part of Clay, & will I have little doubt be in the end successful —

[71] See *Annals of Congress*, 16 Cong., 2 Sess., 1001-1002, 1025-1026.
[72] Samuel A. Foot of Connecticut. See *ibid.*, 1001-1002.
[73] Aaron Hackley, Jr., of New York. See *ibid.*, 1002.
[74] Samuel Moore of Pennsylvania. See *ibid.*, 1027.
[75] Louis McLane of Delaware. See *ibid.*, 999-1000, 1002, 1006-1025.
[76] See *ibid.*, 1027.

The committee will of course consist, a majority of them, of what were last winter called dough faces — & if they can agree among themselves, the southern people will accept their proviso, whatever it may be — Here the matter rests for the present —

I have hardly time to add what were my own views on this subject — The people of Missouri having neglected or refused to comply with the terms prescribed to them, in the act of the last session, I considered myself no longer bound, if indeed I could at all be bound, to admit them under the law into the Union — Of course, the question of restriction was once more open to discussion — & for my part, I was determined, & still am, never to vote for the admission of any state, without a provision against the introduction of slavery among its inhabitants — With these sentiments however, it is quite another question whether we ought, at this time, again to propose the Restriction. First, we know it would not pass the Senate, probably not the House — Secondly It is equally certain, after what has passed, it would not be adopted by Missouri — I came therefore to the conclusion that we ought to vote against every proposition which might be made for her admission, this year; to see what she would do in the interim — &, if, when the next Congress met, she presented a constitution which was free from objections, to receive her into the Union — Nor did it seem impossible that when thus left to herself she might prohibit slavery, or at least take some measure tending to its gradual abolition, though she did not chose to do either upon our requisition. Indeed it is the opinion of many well informed people from the west that, if they could be kept out, for two years longer they would of themselves prohibit slavery, as the popula-

tion from the free states would probably before that time outnumber that from the slave-holding states —

But this course has too much the appearance of inaction for busy and impatient men, who want everything done at once & in a day —

I have had considerable conversation with Mr Sargeant on this subject — & I find that he is heartily tired of the question — He wishes to leave Congress, but cannot do it till this subject is finally disposed of — It may be however that he wishes only to leave the House for a seat in the Senate — & he knows that the Republicans of Pennsylvania wish to see this dispute ended — Sargeant is also a little alarmed at the consequences which may grow out of this affair —

Mr Taylor, who moved the restriction last year, has taken no part, beyond voting, in the controversy this session — As Speaker, he wishes to conciliate the southern people, who look upon him with a jealous eye — His election in New York too, will be severely contested; & he wishes to give no offence to the Bucktails, who are, at heart, opposed to restriction — He has therefore acted with great caution; & will, I have no doubt, appoint a Committee favourable to some compromise[77] — Indeed he could not well do otherwise, as it is an invariable rule to give the mover of any proposition a committee friendly to its object — The effect however will be that their report, if not too strong for the Southern people, will find enough of our

[77] *Annals of Congress*, 16 Cong., 2 Sess., 1027. The members of the committee were Clay of Kentucky, Eustis of Massachusetts, Smith of Maryland, Sergeant of Pennsylvania, Lowndes of South Carolina, Ford of New York, Archer of Virginia, Hackley of New York, Samuel Moore of Pennsylvania, Cobb of Georgia, Tomlinson of Connecticut, Butler of New Hampshire, and Campbell of Ohio. *Ibid.*

people included to adopt it, to carry it through by the aid of their votes.

DEAR FATHER, WASHINGTON February 11th 1821

. . . . . .

You will see in the papers that the Committee of Compromise, as it is called, of which he [Clay] is chairman, has reported.[78] Its plan appears to me a very strange one — Of the members of the Committee, Sargeant alone was in favour of restriction at the present time. The report was agreed to by seven only, out of the thirteen — These were Clay, Smith, Lowndes, Archer, & Ford & Hackley from New York — At one time a majority of the committee had agreed to do nothing: but they were persuaded not to ask to be discharged; & the next day they were induced to report as they have done. . . . If we have strength to reject their report, the next question will probably be on authorizing them to form a new constitution — Mr Mallary[79] of Vermont has given notice that he shall move the restriction — But in the present state of things, this would be injudicious, as it will certainly be rejected by a very large majority — I have thought of adding a clause to the resolution, by way of advice only, that they should take such measures as will in their opinion produce the *gradual* abolition of slavery in Missouri — Many of the Southern people were willing to do this last winter — & more cannot

[78] For the text of the report, see *Annals of Congress*, 16 Cong., 2 Sess., 1078-1080. The important change made by the committee in the senate resolution was "that the said State shall never pass any law preventing any description of persons from coming to and settling in the said State, who now are or hereafter may become citizens of any of the States of this Union." For the debate on the report, see *ibid.*, 1093-1117.

[79] Rollin C. Mallary. His motion to amend the amendment proposed by the committee to forbid slavery in Missouri was negatived. *Ibid.*, 1094.

now be attempted with any hopes of success — It would show at least the sense of Congress on the subject of slavery, & would produce a salutary effect not only in Missouri, but in all the Slave States. Such a motion would however be strongly opposed at this time; & there are some objections to it; first, because it would be an abandonment of the restriction in this case; &, second, because it may be doubted whether Congress ought to give advice merely, where it does not chose to command — The old Congress[80] very frequently advised the states; indeed on most subjects they could do nothing more — but I do not now remember any case in which Congress under the present form of government has adopted this course. Yet I see no very serious objection to it — &, if, in any instance, it might properly be done, it is in the present — . . .

DEAR FATHER, WASHINGTON February 15th 1821

. . . . . .

Yesterday was the day for counting the votes for President & Vice President — We had a stormy & tumultuous time of it — It was foreseen that the votes of Missouri would be offered, &, of course, objected to — You will see in the Papers the expedient adopted by the joint committee to avoid this difficulty[81] — It is not one with which I was entirely satisfied — Yet on the whole it seemed to be the only one which could well be adopted — The House would

[80] Under the Articles of Confederation.

[81] *Resolved*, That, if any objection be made to the votes of Missouri, and the counting or omitting to count which shall not essentially change the result of the election; in that case they shall be reported by the President of the Senate in the following manner: Were the votes of Missouri to be counted, the result would be, for A. B. for President of the United States, ——— votes; if not counted, for A. B. as President of the United

not consent to their being counted — The Senate would not consent to their being rejected. This Missouri question occupies us all the time, by night & by day — For the last three or four days we have been in session every day from 11 o'clock to 6 or 7, without adjournment, & of course without rest or food — It is long since I have dined except by candle-light. . . . There was considerable difficulty in arranging the cerimonial on this occasion to be observed between the two Houses — & though there was a joint committee each adopted a different resolution — The Senate claimed for its President that he should preside over the joint assembly — the House that the Speaker should share with him in this office — & the latter course was preserved[82] — When we came to the votes of Missouri, they were objected to by Mr Livermore[83] — The Senate instead of suffering their President to proceed, as it had been agreed in that event he should do, immediately withdrew[84] — Floyd[85] of Virginia in a violent & frantic manner moved a resolution that Missouri was a state & that her votes ought to be counted — He was sustained by Randolph in his cool but determined manner in a speech of extreme severity & violence — till at length Clay growing impatient of the course things were taking, interupted him, & after explaining with great force & dignity, & liberality the cor-

States, ——— votes; but in either event A. B. is elected President of the United States; and in the same manner for Vice President. *Annals of Congress*, 16 Cong., 2 Sess., 1147.

[82] See *ibid.*, 1153. The ceremonies and procedure in counting the electoral vote are given in detail in A. C. Hinds, *Precedents of the House of Representatives*, III, 200 ff.

[83] Arthur Livermore of New Hampshire.

[84] See *Annals of Congress*, 16 Cong., 2 Sess., 1154.

[85] John Floyd. For the text of this resolution and the debate which ensued, see *ibid.*, 1154-1166.

rect course of proceeding, moved to lay the resolution on the table & invite the Senate back again — This was accordingly done, but not till some warmth & no little feeling had been expressed in that dignified body at the treatment they had experienced from the House — On their return the course was pursued with respect to Missouri pointed out by the resolves of both Houses — The President of the Senate[86] then proceeded to make proclamation of the election of Mr Monroe & Tompkins, when he was interupted by Floyd & Randolph, who enquired whether the votes of Missouri had been counted — Mr Gaillard, who, you know, is one of the most polite & complaisant men in the world, was confused and distressed by this interuption, & neither knew which way to look or what to do — He however at length said that he could answer no questions, & had nothing to do but declare the election — This he began again to do, when he was again interrupted by Floyd, who, in the most violent manner, with menacing gestures, & in a tone of defience & rage, exceeding any thing I ever saw, attempted to prevent the vote being declared — Randolph also interfered, but they were both called to order from all quarters of the House & Senate — & directed by the Speaker, who displayed great firmness & presence of mind on this trying occassion, as he always had when put to the trial, to take their seats — Floyd appealed from the dicision, but was again ordered down by the Speaker — Gaillard then made his proclamation — When he closed, Randolph renewed his question midst cries of order, — The Speaker ordered him to sit down — but he continued speaking — when a motion was made by one of the Senators to retire, which was put by their President, & that

[86] John Gaillard of South Carolina.

dignified body retired in some haste, & with little order, from the House, — glad, I believe, to get out of a place where they were treated with so little ceremony or respect — Randolph will no doubt bring the subject up again this morning, & we shall probably have another noisy day — but no harm can now be done, as the election is past —

The conduct of Mr Clay on this occasion has been extremely honorable to himself & useful to the country — It was the opinion of many of the Southern members, that, by aid of this question, they might force Missouri into the Union; & that if the Senate refused to proceed, the House would not dare to stand out, & thus prevent an election of President — But Clay refused to share in any such rash councils — &, having in the first place devised this expedient to avoid the question, he laboured to carry it through the House, & in all the subsequent scenes of disorder & confusion, kept his party down, & thus brought the election to a close in peace, if not in tranquility — Had he taken an opposite course with the weight of his influence & the intrinsic difficulties of the subject, it is impossible to say what would have been the result —

The House was crowded with spectators of this interesting scene; — some of whom I should much rather had not been there, to witness the insubordination which prevailed — I mean, the Foreign Ministers & their agents, who will not report these events to their courts in the most favourable point of view — It is at the same time true that the disturbance was all occasioned by two or three unruly men, & those not on our side but among the friends of Missouri — On our side all was still & orderly as it should be —

This proceeding has shown, what I have often reflected on with pain, the great defect & incompleteness of that part of the Constitution which relates to the choice of a President, although it has already been once amended — In whom does the authority lie to decide on the legality of votes? In the President of the Senate? In the Senate acting through their presiding officer? In both branches of the legislature? Whatever answer you give to these questions, equal difficulty & embarassments will be found to attend it — If ever our government is convulsed to its centre, it will be in the choice of a President — when parties are nearly equal, & the rejection of the votes of a single state, for which pretences will never be wanting, will give the office to the candidate supported by the two Houses, but wanting the support of half the states — Considering what sort of an election the next is likely to be, I earnestly hope that some amendment may be adopted without delay to remove some portion at least of the obscurity & doubt which now hangs over this part of the Constitution — Governor Barbour of the Senate had promised to bring forward some amendment of this part of the Constitution; & though it is impossible to foresee & provide for all contingencies, some provision might certainly be made for the more obvious & alarming defects that now exist[87] — . . .

DEAR FATHER, WASHINGTON February 25th 1821.

. . . . . .

The Missouri question is still open—but I believe still, as I all along have, that it will be closed this session, by the admission immediate or prospective, of the State. At

[87] See footnote 50, above.

least thirty of those who last year voted for restriction, have given up that ground, as either settled last year, or no longer holding out any prospect of success — I have however undergone no change in this respect — With me it is a sufficient objection to the admission of Missouri, at this or any other time, that she has by her constitution expressly established slavery in the state, & even taken measures to render it perpetual. With these views & feelings, I have taken very little interest in the various attempts which have been made to explain away, abrogate, or amend the obnoxious clause respecting free negroes & mulattoes, because if that clause did not exist, I should still vote against her admission, while slavery was expressly established by her constitution —

If I could give up this ground, as so many others have, I do not think I should have so much difficulty with respect to the others — It is certain that every state on coming into the Union submits to the Constitution & Laws of the United States, & all her laws or constitutional provisions inconsistent with these, are thereby made null & void — One other difficulty however remains — Congress by admitting her may be said to give its consent & sanction to this unconstitutional clause — But this difficulty is removed by the provisos, which have been proposed, expressly denying any such consent or approbation.

This view of the case seems to me so plain & obvious, that I have never doubted that, (as their is a strong majority against restriction,) those who see no objection to this clause, & those who object to no other, would in the end devise some expedient by which Missouri should be admitted. . . . The Committee of thirty[88] has had one meet-

[88] On February 22, Clay moved the appointment of a committee to

ing, & are to meet again this evening, when it is expected they will agree upon some report; & whatever it may be, it will, I think, be adopted by both branches. Every day, as we approach the close of the session, some one comes out (from our side, I mean) with a new declaration that we must close this controversy before we part — & this declaration is but another way of saying that they are ready to surrender, & wait only for the favourable moment —

Many of the southern people, & particularly the Virginians, talk coolly & deliberately of a separation of the States, or at least of an attempt to deprive the General Government of some portion of its powers — Besides this business of Missouri, they say that the General Government is every year setting up new claims & pretensions — They mention the establishment of the Bank; the jurisdiction assumed in so many disputed cases by the Supreme Court; & many other incroachments, as they deem them, of the Government generally — Virginia is at this moment before the Supreme Court, as a party in her sovereign capacity as a State, notwithstanding the provision of the Constitution that no state shall be sued — She has pled to the Jurisdiction — & if this is decided against her, as it probably will be, she means not to answer to the merits of the case, but resist judgment, if it goes against her — Ohio has a still more violent quarrel with the Court — In the Virginia case, (that of lotteries authorized by Congress, &

meet with a similar committee from the senate to consider and report on the question of the admission of Missouri into the Union. *Annals of Congress*, 16 Cong., 2 Sess., 1219. This resolution being passed, and the number of members of the committee being set at twenty-three, the house proceeded on February 23 to elect its committee members. *Ibid.*, 1223-1224. The next day the senate voted to concur in the proposition and appointed seven members to meet with the house committee. *Ibid.*, 381-382.

prohibited by her laws,) the Court will probably decide in favour of the Jurisdiction, thus securing their own power, & on the merits, in favour of Virginia[89] — . . .

WASHINGTON, February 26th, 1821

DEAR FATHER,

. . . . . .

The Missouri question is at last decided, at least as far as the House of Representatives is concerned — The joint Committee of thirty had their second meeting sunday afternoon, & agreed upon the resolution which you will see in the papers — Of the seven senators, six were in favour of the resolution[90] — Rufus King, the seventh, did not attend — They met in the evening & his excuse was indisposition — but it was mental, not bodily.[91] That no time might be lost, Clay had the resolution printed & laid on our tables without order of the House[92] — And when it had passed to a

[89] Plumer was correct as to the probable decision to be rendered in *Cohens v. Virginia*, 6 Wheaton, 264. The Ohio case reached its climax in *Osborn v. Bank of the United States*, 9 Wheaton, 738. Contemporary opinion and criticism of these decisions is ably summarized in Charles Warren, *The Supreme Court in United States History*, II, 7-24, 117-119; I, 529-538.

[90] John Holmes of Maine, James Barbour of Virginia, Jonathan Roberts of Pennsylvania, David L. Morril of New Hampshire, Samuel L. Southard of New Jersey, Richard M. Johnson of Kentucky.

[91] "The Comee. meet at 5 oc this evening, but I shall not attend." King to C. King, February 24, 1821; *Life and Correspondence of Rufus King*, VI, 387. An interesting treatment of King's position on the entire question is given by H. C. Hockett, "Rufus King and the Missouri Compromise," in *Missouri Historical Review*, II, 211-220.

[92] The resolution provided for the admission of Missouri into the Union on condition that no law should be passed "by which any citizen of either of the States in this Union shall be excluded from the enjoyment

second reading, in like manner, without order, he had it engrossed — & finding the House in a favourable mood, this important resolution, on a subject which had occupied so much of our time, was finally passed through all the forms of the House, in less time than I ever saw before devoted to any, even the most ordinary, subject —

On the third reading the majority was four, & on the final passage six[93] — It was with great reluctance that many of the Southern members voted for the resolution,—& nothing but the exertions of Clay brought them to it — No other man could have effected it — Randolph & Garnet[94] voted against it to the end — & Parker of Virginia, & some others, bolted — Many others feel ashamed of their votes, as in manifest opposition to all their former declarations — On our side, it was evident that we were daily losing ground — & many are heartily glad that the resolution has passed who did not themselves votes for it —

In the Senate the resolution will meet with some opposition even from the South; but will no doubt pass without amendment[95] — I cannot account for the sudden change of

of any of the privileges and immunities to which such citizen is entitled under the Constitution of the United States." The legislature was required to declare its assent to this condition and to transmit a copy of its act to the President by the fourth Monday of the following November; "upon the receipt whereof the President, by proclamation, shall announce the fact: whereupon, and without any further proceeding on the part of Congress, the admission of the said State into this Union shall be considered as complete." *Annals of Congress*, 16 Cong., 2 Sess., 1228.

[93] For the debate and votes, see *ibid.*, 1236-1240.

[94] Robert S. Garnett of Virginia.

[95] The senate took up the house resolution on February 27. A motion by Nathaniel Macon of North Carolina to strike out the condition and proviso was defeated. *Ibid.*, 388. On February 28 the senate passed the resolution, without amendment as Plumer expected, by a vote of 28 to 14. *Ibid.*, 390.

Mr. Morril of our State, who has declared in favor of the resolution, contrary to the whole course of his former votes & speeches — so that the voice of New Hampshire in the Senate will be unanimous in favour of admission,[96] as it has always been unanimously against it in the House.

[96] Senators Morril and Parrott voted in the affirmative.

PART II

Presidential Politics

1820-1825

PRESIDENTIAL POLITICS, 1820-1825

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO SALMA HALE[1]

WASHINGTON April 5th 1820

DEAR SIR,

. . . . . .

You ask my opinion of Adams & Crawford, & enquire what are their prospects. I do not think highly of Crawford's talents — He certainly does not possess much genius, nor any great share of acquired knowledge — He is also too fond of popularity to act with independence — But he is a pleasant man — & has many friends — the southern people look up to him, as a *matter of course,* to succeed Mr. Monroe, & many of our northern members are unwise enough to acquiesce in this design — When will the race of idiots or of traitors be extinct amongst us? — Of Mr. Adams' talents, knowledge, & integrity, I have the highest opinion — they are universally acknowledged — but he wants those popular talents which Crawford possesses, & is, I think, in general rather respected than beloved.

[1] Salma Hale, a resident of Keene, New Hampshire, played a fairly prominent part in state and national politics, holding various state offices and being elected to the Fifteenth Congress as a democrat. He served as secretary to the boundary commission appointed under the Treaty of Ghent. He published a number of works, among them a *History of the United States for Schools.*

We are just beginning to talk of the next Presidential election — There is to be a caucus some time this week — there will be very little opposition to Mr. Monroe, though he is by no means popular in the Congress — There will be more diversity of opinion as to a Vice President — Among others, Mr. Clay is talked of — & this, I take it, is the secret of his proposed resignation of his seat in the House[2] — But his conduct in relation to the Missouri bill ought not to recommend him to the free states — While speaking of Adams, I should have added that he must be our candidate for the presidency after Monroe — Yet here is the old difficulty again. The south has but one candidate. — We have two or three — & in the end we shall be, as usual, defeated by ourselves —. . .

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

House of Representatives — April 10th 1820

Dear father,

The Caucus on Saturday night ended, as I expected, in doing nothing — The object was to nominate Mr. Clay as Vice President — & to operate upon the New York election, though it is very uncertain what this operation would have been — It is generally agreed that Clay would make a good Vice President — that is, he would make a good presiding officer in the Senate — But it is feared that this office would enable him to get the President's chair, at the end of the next four years — For this purpose he has some great advantages — he is the only man in the western states who will be thought of — his talents are popular —

[2] Clay resigned in October, 1820.

he would be on the spot to make friends — out of the way of the responsibility which he now incurs by the measures which he occasionally proposes — & being already in the second office would seem a fit candidate for the first — But he would make a most dangerous President — On this account, he finds not many inclined to aid his ambitious views — Only forty six members, out of two hundred and thirty, attended the Caucus — & the greater part of those merely to see what others meant to do — I should have gone myself, from curiosity, if the weather had been good — but it was very unpleasant & I have been troubled for a day or two with a slight cold, & hoarseness — On the motion of Col. Johnson of Kentucky, the meeting resolved that it was inexpedient to make any nomination, & then adjourned — Still however, if Tompkins is chosen Governor of New York, there will be great difficulty in fixing on a Candidate for Vice President[3] —

With respect to President, Mr. Monroe is by no means popular — but no other person is even talked of as his opponent. The reasons are obvious — a re-election has become a matter of course, if there is no very strong objections — there is no one man who stands so much above the rest as to unite the public voice in his favour — Adams, Crawford, Clinton, Clay, King — none of these are willing to start for the present in the race — all but the last will be candidates after the next term — & they know that any present attempt would destroy their future hopes. . . .

[3] See Plumer's letter of April 7, 1820, above; also footnote 43, below. *Cf.* J. Q. Adams, *Memoirs*, V, 57-59, for an account of the caucus, and of Tompkins's candidacy for the governorship of New York against De Witt Clinton. Adams stated that Tompkins had "no thought of relinquishing the Vice-Presidency if he should fail in the election as Governor of New York." Clinton was re-elected governor and Tompkins was re-elected vice-president.

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

House of Representatives April 11th 1820

Dear father,

Some of the Southern members are opposed to Mr. Clay's being Vice President, because they think it will be an argument in favour of taking the President from the Northern or Middles States — & other say that the Vice President ought to come from the Western States, but they propose Mr. Morrow[4] of Ohio — Gen. King[5] & Governor Wolcott[6] have also been named — but only by their particular friends — If Tompkins is not the candidate, there will probably be no choice by the people — This would be no great inconvenience — though the failure to chose a President would be a serious one — but of this there is no danger — If there ever was a time when a Congressional Caucus was unnecessary it is the present — The only question about which there is any difference of opinion is with respect to the Vice President — & this is a point, about which, at present, we may divide, without danger or inconvenience.

WILLIAM PLUMER TO WILLIAM PLUMER JR.

Dear William Epping April 24, 1820

. . . . . .

I am glad the Congressional caucus met & adjourned *sine die* without nominating candidates for either President

[4] Jeremiah Morrow, elected first representative from the state of Ohio to the Eighth Congress as a democrat. He was in the house from 1803 to 1813, when he was elected to the senate, serving from 1813 to 1819.

[5] Rufus King of New York.

[6] Oliver Wolcott, member of the Continental Congress, governor of Connecticut, and Hamilton's successor as secretary of the treasury, which office he held from 1795 to 1800.

or Vice President. Caucuses are at a low ebb. They have, in general, discovered too much management & intrigue — too much regard for *private*, & too little respect for the *public interest.*

Mr. Clay would make a good presiding officer in the senate, whom he formally designated as the *House of Incurables.* Tho I respect his talents & integrity, I fear his vast ambition would prevent him from being a safe & useful president of the nation. I am not willing to trust the destiny of my country to his government. He would never wish to preside over the senate in preference to the house, unless with a view to obtain the office of chief majestrate. I would not therefore make him Vice President. . . .

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

Washington November 13th 1820

Dear father,

I called on Mr. Lowndes[7] this evening & had with him, as I always have when we meet, much interesting conversation. . . .

He gave me the following account of the organization of the Cabinet in 1817 — Crawford & Clay both wished to be made Secretary of State — & each insisted that the other should not have the appointment — After much pains had been taken, & neither would relinquish his claims to the other, it was agreed that Adams should have the office, as being a man, who, in their opinion, was less dangerous than any other person to whom it could be given — that is, less likely to stand in their way to the Presidency — I should like, said Lowndes, to know of them now what they

[7] William Lowndes of South Carolina.

think of this latter proposition, or what probability it had then. He was not, he says, strictly speaking, in the secrets of the parties; but was on the spot, & knew enough to satisfy him, beyond a doubt, that this was the true history of Mr. Adams' appointment[8] — This is certainly very probable — & it would not be a little curious, if two such able politicians as Clay & Crawford, should, by this act, have brought forward a man who of all others was most capable & likely to outstrip them both in the Presidential race — Mr. Lowndes said he sincerely wished that the next President, after Monroe, might be from the North; that we were growing uneasy for want of one; & that it was good policy, even in the South, to comply with our wishes. This was the opinion of some of their most liberal men; but with the majority, it was objection enough to any man that he came from the North. . . .

I asked Mr. Lowndes if he had not himself had offers of a seat in the Cabinet — He said he had — & that in Mr. Madison's administration, he might have been Secretary

[8] In a letter of February 23, 1817, to Jefferson, Monroe wrote that he believed it would promote harmony in political circles if he were to select his secretary of state from the North, and that he had decided upon Adams. In this letter he did not mention Crawford or Clay for the position. James Monroe, *Writings*, (S. M. Hamilton, ed.), VI, 2-4. Monroe made a similar statement to Andrew Jackson. *Ibid.*, VI, 5. However, Lowndes is reported as writing in his note-book: "I remember Forsyth's telling me, speaking as if he personally knew it, that Mr. Monroe would have been quite willing to make Crawford Secretary of State if Clay had been willing. The difficulty was to give no decided advantage to either Clay or Crawford as competitors for the Presidency. The expedient employed was to make Adams Secretary of State, because, as Mr. Monroe said, 'it was impossible he should ever be President.' I confess I do not see exactly the impossibility." Mrs. St. J. Ravenel, *Life and Times of William Lowndes*, 231. See also Albert Gallatin, *Writings* (Henry Adams, ed.), II, 14, 24-26, where Crawford in letters of October 9, 1816 and March 12, 1817 gives Gallatin his version of the selection of Monroe's cabinet.

of the Treasury (I suppose when Gallatin retired) & subsequently Secretary of War — & that he was offered the latter office by Mr. Monroe — but he preferred a seat in the house.[9] . . .

WILLIAM PLUMER TO WILLIAM PLUMER JR.

DEAR WILLIAM EPPING Nov. 15, 1820

A portion of New England is looking forward to the presidential election of 1824, with that view, as I learn from a communication I have this day received, some of the Electors will give John Q. Adams their votes to be Vice President.[10] Their object in this is not to defeat the re-election of Tompkins, but to evince their confidence in Adams & prepare the public mind for his election as President four years hence. My object in writing you now is to request that you would without delay visit Mr. Adams, & in confidence ask him if he has no objection to this procedure. Write me, as soon as may be, the result of your visit. Delay will be injurious. I need not add that this is confidential. . . .

[9] Madison's offer to Lowndes of the post of secretary of war is mentioned in several of Madison's letters. See James Madison, *Letters and other Writings* (Congressional ed., 1865), III, 25-26, 29, 30. Monroe, after offering the post to Clay, who declined, decided upon Andrew Jackson, but being assured that Jackson would not accept, tendered it to Governor Isaac Shelby of Kentucky, who also refused it. James Monroe, *Writings*, VI, 1-2, 4-6. It was finally accepted by Calhoun. Crawford in a letter to Gallatin, October 16, 1816, stated that "the President writes to me that he has offered the War Department to Mr. Lowndes". Albert Gallatin, *Writings*, II, 14.

[10] *Cf.* Daniel Webster, *Letters* (Claude H. Van Tyne, ed.), 85.

The exchange of letters between the two Plumers on the subject of the elder Plumer's electoral vote definitely refutes the statement by McMaster *(History of the People of the United States*, IV, 518), and other writers, that Plumer cast his vote for Adams in order that no man should share

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

Washington November 24th 1820

Dear father,

I called yesterday after the House adjourned on the Secretary of State at his office. After informing him that you were chosen one of the Electors of President & Vice President in New Hampshire, I handed him your letter to me on the subject of voting for him as Vice-President. He read it with attention; & then said, that he was under great obligations to you for the very friendly manner in which you had acted in this affair, as well as for the favourable sentiments which your intended vote implied; but that he earnestly & sincerely desired that neither you, nor any person, would give him a single vote for Vice President at the present election; — that with a view to the object mentioned in your letter, that of bringing him forward as President in 1824, he did not think the proposed vote now would be of any service to him then, but might injure him; that Tompkins might calculate on the votes of New York, Pennsylvania, & Virginia for Vice President, but that beyond these all was uncertain — that he stood well with Tompkins, & did not wish to withdraw a single vote from him, especially as it might possibly prevent an election. He said that this was the first intimation that he had received of a design to vote for him in New England, & wished you would use your influence to prevent its taking place. It is apparent, I think, though he did not say so in express terms, that he wishes to keep New York on his

with Washington the honor of a unanimous election to the presidency. See Charles O. Paullin, "The Electoral Vote for John Quincy Adams in 1820", *American Historical Review*, XXI, 318-319; William Plumer, *Memorandum of Proceedings in the United States Senate, 1803-1807* (Everett S. Brown, ed.), p. VII.

side by the aid of Tompkins, or at least to employ him against Clinton, with whom, as a rival for the Presidency, he must, of course, have to contend. It is therefore his interest to be on good terms with Tompkins, which he could not well do, if he were to attempt to get his office from him. Everything relating to himself, as a candidate for the office of President after Monroe, was rather implied than expressed; but the whole conversation proceeded upon the supposition of his being a candidate for that office.

On this latter subject, I had much conversation with Mr. Adams — He said that the question of Slavery in the new states — a President from the slave or the free states, — would, in his opinion, be the great rallying point at the next election, &, of course render it a struggle between the north & the south; that the first object of each party would be to unite upon some one man among themselves; that at the south this man must, from present appearances, be either Crawford, or Clay; & that at the North they would be divided between Clinton, King, Tompkins, & (I added) himself — & in my opinion, said he, it will be no easy matter for either party to agree among themselves as to who their man shall be. He seemed on the whole to think, that there would be no choice by the Electors; & that it must finally come to the House of Representatives to decide the momentous question.

We afterwards talked more at large as to the probable success of the several candidates. He thought that Mr. Clay, though he had a strong party against him now in his own state, would finally unite the Western People in his favour — he was evidently their first man, & if he could not be made President there was nobody in that quarter that could — they must therefore unite for him or abandon

for the present the idea of giving a President to the Union. He said that Clay had acted injudiciously in attempting, last winter, to get himself nominated for the Vice-President — it disclosed his designs too soon; before the West was prepared to support him with zeal or unanimity; & alienated from him the friends of Crawford in the South. On the whole, he considered it certain that Clay would not be President, if at all, next after Monroe. He thought however that he had many more partizans in Congress than appeared in the Caucus last winter,[11] particularly among the New York members.

With respect to Crawford he said that he had a service contest to sustain in his own state; & it had been there so far decided against him that his rival Gen. Clark[12] had been chosen governor of Georgia. The influence of Gen. Jackson was great in Georgia & Tennessee, & he & all his friends were warm against Crawford — the charges of Clark touched the personal character of Crawford; & his quarrel was in that respect worse than even Clinton's in New York — Clinton was called ambitious — this might be true, & yet be no crime — the means which he employed to advance himself were of a public nature, & though sometimes, no doubt, improper, they did not, as in Crawford's case, touch his honor as a gentleman, or his integrity as a man — He was indeed an intriguer of the first water — Crawford has left no stone unturned to effect his object — He intrigues with members — That, said Mr. Adams, is what I never have done, & never will do. All his appointments, such as land officers, receivers of the Public money, Col-

[11] See Plumer's letter to Salma Hale, April 5, 1820, above.

[12] John Clarke was elected governor in 1819 and again in 1821. The political rivalry between the Crawford and Clarke factions is well related in U. B. Phillips, *Georgia and State Rights*, 95-112.

lectors, &c. are made with a direct view to this object. He has sent into all the new states & territories his partizans, men uniformly from the south, friends of slavery, & of southern domination. Two laws were passed, last session, said Mr. Adams, both coming from the Treasury Department, both good in themselves, but intended to operate directly to advance the election of Mr. Crawford; — by the first, (of May 15, 1820,) the offices of all District Attornies, Collectors of the Customs, Naval Officers, Surveyors of the Customs, Navy Agents, Receivers of Public Monies, Land Officers, Pay masters, &c. were made to expire once in four years[13] — Now it so *happens* that nearly all these officers are appointed through the Treasury Department, & are, in effect, made by the Secretary. Here then is a host of officers who hold their continuance in office, in the first instance, to Crawford, & who, four years hence, just when he wants their aid the most, will be all out of offices again, & must look to him for a renewal of their commissions.[14] The other law, also May 15th (observe, both these acts passed the last day of the session) gives to the Treasury a summary process, by Warrant & Distress, without a suit at law, against all persons indebted to the public, such as collectors, receivers of money &c.; but it adds, that the Secretary may, in all cases, "postpone, for a reasonable time, the institution of the proceedings required by this act, where, in his opinion, the public interest will sustain no injury by such postponement"[15] — in other words, he is armed with full powers, to be exercised without control, against any agent who may become obnoxious to him, &

[13] See U. S., *Statutes at Large*, III, 582.

[14] On this point, compare Carl R. Fish, *Civil Service and Patronage*, 66 ff.

[15] See U. S., *Statutes at Large*, III, 592.

at the same time authorized to spare a delinquent, who may be devoted to his service. Few members of congress saw the true design of these laws, said Mr. Adams, but you will all see what use will be made of them. He said, these intrigues of Crawford were known, his measures watched, & that in due season the public would be informed of them. Adams means, I have no doubt, through some friend, to expose Crawford's manoeuvres, some time between this & 1824; & he calculates with some confidence in the reaction which will be produced by this exposure. The general conclusion respecting Crawford seemed to be, that he would not be able, even if they & his friends gave up to him, to unite all the south in his favour —; that Georgia & Tennessee would probably be against him, & South Carolina inclined to vote for a northern man, agreeable to the suggestion of Lowndes to me, mentioned in a former letter — that Jackson might perhaps carry with him Louisiana, & perhaps Mississippi & Alabama — but all this would depend upon the state of feeling respecting the Slavery Question, — which, while it served to unite us at the North, operated, with perhaps equal effect, against us at the South. He thought this subject would continue to engage the public attention; that it would continue to fester & rankle in the minds of the people, till, owing to this, & other causes, it would, at the next election be, not so much a question of the personal merits of the candidates, as of north & south, free & slave states — this was a division not to be desired; but, at the same time, not to be avoided; & perhaps necessary, in the first instance, to restore to the northern states their due weight in the councils of the Union.

He said there was a great struggle going on in Ohio, Indiana, & Illinois, the object of which was to see whether

the Southern or Northern Interest should prevail in those States. The Northern interest might be considered as pretty well fixed in Ohio. In Illinois, an attempt was made, having its origin in this place, to turn out "poor little Cook",[16] & send a southern man & a friend of Slavery, to Congress in his place — but it had entirely failed — Cook was re-elected by a very great majority.

With respect to Clinton, he thought he would, at any rate, obtain many votes if he held his ground in New York, all in that state, & probably many more — He has many friends in Pennsylvania, & in Ohio; & has taken much pains to make Jackson & his friends favourable to him — You no doubt remember the toast in favour of Clinton which Jackson gave, before his enemies the Tammany Society, when he visited New York, two or three years since.[17] Gen. Brown[18] is also a Clintonian — Clinton is a great intriguer, & will not fail to set every engine in motion which can aid his purpose — Mr. Adams seemed however to think it not improbable that Tompkins would be governor of New York at the next election, & Clinton of course put down — But I confess, I think this not very probable —

Of his own prospects of success, Mr. Adams said nothing direct or positive — He spoke of King & Tompkins as likely to be candidates at the North — but the former is, I think, too old; & the latter is obviously out of the question; so that the choice, with us, seems clearly to lie between Adams & Clinton; & he seemed in fact so to consider

[16] Daniel P. Cook.

[17] This episode occurred during Jackson's tour of the North early in 1819. Full details are given in James Parton, *Life of Andrew Jackson*, II, 561 ff.; see also, John S. Bassett, *Life of Andrew Jackson*, I, 287.

[18] Jacob Brown, hero of the battle of Lundy's Lane and other engagements of the War of 1812.

it — From the whole tenure of the conversation, I infer that he & Crawford are not merely rivals, but, as the saying is, at swords points already — It must, of course, be much worse two or three years hence. I did not enquire how the President stood affected in these contests; but I am greatly mistaken if he does not find it difficult to govern his cabinet in peace much longer[19] —

The conversation, of which I have endeavored to give you the substance, lasted about an hour & a half — I have been able to touch only on the leading points — I said little myself, only enough to excite Mr. Adams to converse freely. It was evident that he had thought much on the subject; & I have no reason to doubt his candour & sincerity in what he said — It was evidently of a confidential nature; though he said nothing of keeping it secret, it would be improper that such views & details should be made public.[20] I make it a point, while here, to get, as much as possible, into the best company; to turn the conversation, when alone with leading men, upon subjects of an important nature; & to obtain from them, where I can, their real opinions & views respecting events, past, present, & to come. These I communicate, as I have leisure, freely to you — In return, I ask your sentiments & advice on all important measures as they may occur.

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

DEAR FATHER, WASHINGTON November 25th 1820

Least you should not receive my last two letters in season, I write this, directed to you at Concord, merely to say,

[19] For the strained relations which existed between Monroe and Crawford, see F. J. Turner, *Rise of the New West*, 196-198.

[20] *Cf.* J. Q. Adams, *Memoirs*, V, 205-206.

that Mr. ——— [Adams] desires that not a single vote may be given him as Vice President at the approaching election — This is his sincere wish; & he hopes that nothing like what you suggest will any where take place —

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

DEAR FATHER, WASHINGTON November 27th 1820

. . . . . .

I have already indulged so much in speculations respecting a future President of the United States, that I am tempted to give you one more on this head. In conversation on this subject with Gen. Cocke[21] of Tennessee, son of the Senator of that name, whom you probably recollect, he told me that the Southern & Western People were convinced that the next President must come from the North — that we were too strong for them — but they knew how to work us — that we should be divided, & they would choose between our candidates — if these candidates were Adams & Clinton, they should choose Clinton, as being the man whom they could best manage — that they were afraid of Adams, & could make no bargain with him — but that Clinton, owing his election to them, would be their man, dependent on them, & therefore compelled to act as they should direct — From the character which Clinton generally bears, they think that he has his price & may be bought — This may be true to a certain extent; but I do not think they would find him very subservient to their views, if once fairly seated in the chair — . . .

[21] John Cocke served under Jackson at New Orleans. He was later a member of congress from 1819 to 1827. His father, William Cocke, was a fellow member of the senate with William Plumer, Sr.

WILLIAM PLUMER TO WILLIAM PLUMER JR.

CONCORD Dec. 6, 1820

DEAR WILLIAM

I received your letter directed to me at this place upon the subject of Mr. A[dams] wishes.

The Electors met yesterday, today gave 7 votes for Mr. Monroe to be president 1 to Mr. Adams, 7 to Mr. Tompkins & one to Mr. Rush to be Vice President. You will be at no loss to know who voted for Adams & Rush, or the consideration on which those votes were given — they were the result of mature consideration.[22] . . .

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

DEAR FATHER, WASHINGTON January 27th 1821

Speaking of the President, Mr. Randolph said, the other day, in debate, that his popularity was more apparent than real — The public mind, said he, is torpid; & the uanimity, about which we hear so much, is the unanimity of indifference, & not of approbation — There is, I think, great force & truth in this remark — & the very President who is just re-elected, with but one dissenting voice throughout the Union, is not only the least deserving of all our Presidents, but has actually, at this moment, fewer real friends & admirers, & less influence, than any of his predecessors ever had. This seems a paradox, but it is strictly true — & I have no doubt that, in less than four years, your vote will be thought no slight proof [of] wisdom & firmness,

[22] Adams expressed "surprise and mortification" at Plumer's vote. *Memoirs*, V, 279. Nevertheless, he was carefully weighing the qualifications of his rivals and suspecting their political activities. *Ibid.*, V, 297-300, 325-326, 327.

by many who now regard it is strange & unaccountable —

We have lately given a pretty strong proof of the little influence possessed, by the Administration, over the House of Representatives, by the passage of the Army bill[23] — The Secretary of War & all his friends, in & out of doors, opposed it by every expedient in their power — The President was known to be against it — & probably other members of the Cabinet — but it was carried, notwithstanding many defects in the details of the bill, by an overwhelming majority — A similar proof was given last year in the refusal of the House to proceed with the Yellow Stone Expedition,[24] after the President had informed us that it was a subject of very great importance, in which he took a particular interest, & was willing to incur great responsibilities to secure its success. The Secretary of War[25] also considered this as a favourite project, & took much pains to advance it — but without success — He is not I think very popular in the House, though considered as a man of superior talents — I have seen him several times this winter, & become some acquainted with him — He possesses great affibility & sprightliness in conversation — He is attentive & laborious in business, & seems to devote himself with ardour & fidelity to the duties of his station — He is certainly a man of great talents — & in this respect

[23] After days of debate the house on January 23, 1821, passed a bill for the reduction of the army by a vote of 109 to 48. *Annals of Congress*, 16 Cong., 2 Sess., 936-937.

[24] See Hiram Martin Chittenden, *American Fur Trade of the Far West*, II, 562-587; Edwin James, *Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains . . . under the Command of Maj. S. H. Long, Early Western Travels* (Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed.), XIV-XVII.

[25] John C. Calhoun. An excellent summary of Calhoun's plan for the reorganization of the army is that by Emory Upton in his *Military Policy of the United States*, 149 ff.

much superior to Mr. Crawford — He is undoubtedly an ambitious man — & by some is considered as looking to the Presidency even at the next election — But I hardly think this probable, as he is still a young man, & so many are visibly before him in the race —

Mr. Crawford suffers very much in public estimation from the obscurity, the mistakes, & the ignorance which mark his reports at the present session on the state of our finances — For my own part, I have never seen in him, at any time, the unequivocal proofs of a great mind; & there is now something more than this negative testimony against him — Adams & Calhoun are undoubtedly the ablest men in the cabinet — What Adams wants, is acquaintance with the temper & disposition of those around him, manners more accommodating, & a readiness to yield small points, that he may carry great ones — Calhoun's defect is the want of judgment & moderation — His schemes are too grand & magnificent, & he labours too much for show & effect — If we had a revenue of a hundred millions, he would be at no loss how to spend it. At the same time I do not know that he is wasteful or extravagant — On the contrary, it is the boast of his friends that the Army never cost so little as it now does under his administration —

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

Dear father, Washington December 3d 1821

We have ballotted seven times for Speaker without making any choice — The prominent candidates are Taylor & Rodney[26] — The contest is not precisely what it was last

[26] Caesar A. Rodney of Delaware. For a record of the balloting, see *Annals of Congress*, 17 Cong., 1 Sess., I, 514-515.

year — It then turned wholly upon the Missouri question — The same feeling prevails to a certain extent now; but other considerations mix with the old controversy, & give it a different aspect. The general merits of Taylor are acknowledged on all sides — the opposition of the South is considerably abated; but in the meantime, a majority of the members from his own state vote against him upon the ground that he is a Clintonian — many in Pennsylvania do the same from similar motives — & the whole of Connecticut is against him, partly from the same, & partly from other considerations — one of these is a wish to make Mr. Tomlinson,[27] a member from that state, Speaker; but a more powerful reason is that Taylor is said to be opposed to Adams as President — I have seen Taylor this evening, & he denies the charges, & says that Adams expressed a wish that he should be elected in preference to Rodney[28] —

While Taylor has thus been losing friends in the North he has gained some in the South & West — With many the part he took respecting Missouri is no longer considered an objection — But the principal gain in that quarter arises from his being considered as favourable to what was last session called the Radical party, or in other words to a reduction of the expenditures of the Government wherever they can be safely diminished — On this ground he is supported by Gen. Cocke & other thorough Radicals, who were last year among his most bitter enemies —

Lowndes is absent, no doubt with a view to avoid being a candidate — Those who were opposed to Taylor divided

[27] Gideon Tomlinson.

[28] *Cf.* J. Q. Adams, *Memoirs*, V, 437-440, where Adams reports that he called on Taylor and assured him that he preferred him to Rodney. Taylor, in turn, told of his political difficulties in New York.

their votes between Rodney & McLaine[29] of Delaware, & Smith[30] of Maryland — McLaine they have nearly abandoned — Rodney they supported merely because they cannot agree upon anybody else — It is twenty years since he was in Congress[31] — he has no acquaintance with the duties of the Chair; & he is said to be a man of no industry, method, or application to business — & on the Missouri question he was as Zealous, though not so prominent as Taylor; so that he has no peculiar claims on the South or West — It is thought by many that they will drop him in the morning, & take up Smith, who had 26 votes at the last ballot — If they do not, & Taylor's friends stand by him, enough of Rodney's will join them to secure the election of the former at the second or third trial — He has been gradually gaining from 60 to 77 votes at the last trial. He wanted only seven votes more to be chosen — This protracted contest will bring some scandal upon the House, & is therefore to be regretted; but I do not see how it could have been avoided, unless we had surrendered at once to a man totally unknown to the House, & who had no peculiar claims to our support. . . .

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

Washington December 4th 1821

Dear father,

The opponents of Mr. Taylor finding that Rodney & Smith could not succeed against him, dropped them both,

[29] Louis McLane.

[30] Samuel Smith.

[31] Rodney was a member of the Eighth Congress (1803-1805). He served as attorney general under Jefferson and Madison (1807-1811), and was one of the commissioners sent to South America by President Monroe

& took up Mr. Barbour[32] of Virginia; & after several trials succeeded in electing him by a majority of two votes — So that the Speaker's chair is at last filled, & by a member from Virginia[33] — Barbour will, I think, make a pretty good Speaker — but I am very sorry on many accounts that Taylor was not elected — But a dead set had been made against him, & unwearied pains taken in New York, Pennsylvania, & Connecticut to defeat his election — This was done, so far as southern influence prevailed, with a view to put down any & every man who took part in the Missouri question, or who possesses weight of character in the northern states — Barbour goes all lengths in these feelings, & is wholly absorbed in reflections on the rights, & the influence, the authority & preeminence of Virginia — In other respects, in the ordinary rotine of office, I think he will make a good Speaker — Which would not have been the case with Smith or Rodney. . . .

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

Washington December 11th 1821

Dear father,

. . . . . .

Mr. Crawford was in to see us the other evening — He gave many indications, in the course of conversation, in-

to investigate and report on the propriety of recognizing the independence of the Spanish-American republics. He was later elected to the United States senate but resigned in January, 1823, having been appointed minister plenipotentiary to Buenos Aires. He died there in 1824.

[32] Philip P. Barbour.

[33] *Cf.* J. Q. Adams, *Memoirs*, V, 451; *Annals of Congress*, 17 Cong., 1 Sess., I, 515-516. A full account of the proceedings in the house on December 3 and December 4 is printed in *Niles' Register*, XXI, 233-235. Editorial comment on the motives underlying the election of speaker is given in *ibid.*, XXI, 242-243.

cidentally, but plainly enough, of his ill will towards the head of the War Department — It appears from his statement that many officers of the army are dissatisfied with the organization and selection made by the Secretary of War under the act of the last session[34] — that several of these officers had been to Crawford with their complaints, & that he takes sides with them — He said nothing indeed *very* unfriendly to Calhoun, but many which a real friend would not have uttered — These views were drawn out of him principally by Gen. Cocke, who is well known to be hostile to Calhoun, & Crawford was thus led to say, not more than he thought or felt, but more than he would otherwise have disclosed — This opposition of views between the two Southern Secretaries does not look much like Crawford's being President — Every thing here is unfortunately made to lend to the next Presidential election; & the choice of Barbour is openly spoken of as favouring the views of Crawford — . . .

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

DEAR FATHER, WASHINGTON December 17th 1821

. . . . . .

The subject of the next President begins already to be discussed — & the partizans of Crawford are said to be very busy in making him friends in Congress — Every thing will be made for the next two years to bear on this great object — Such is the misfortune of our government, that the question who shall be our next President,? sets aside, in innumerable cases, the enquiry of what is just, what is honorable, what is for the public good? . . .

[34] Act of March 2, 1821. U. S., *Statutes at Large*, III, 615-616.

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

DEAR FATHER, WASHINGTON December 28th 1821

. . . . . .

The failure of Taylor's election as Speaker was to be imputed wholly to the angry feelings engendered in the political contests of New York; but I do not think these feelings are likely to be enlisted in opposition to Mr. Adams as a candidate for the Presidency — the Bucktails are, I think, in general friendly to him — & the Clintonians when they find their favourite fairly down, as I think he now is, will prefer Adams to any other man — Still however our great danger is from division — . . .

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

DEAR FATHER, WASHINGTON December 30th 1821

. . . . . .

The question as to the next President seems to be agitated in various newspapers & in different parts of the country with much zeal. I am told that the members of the legislature of South Carolina lately met in caucus & voted, 57 to 54, to support William Lowndes of our House as a candidate for the Presidency[35] — the 54 voters threw blanks, the object being merely to see whether Lowndes should be set up or not — This fact indicates a division at the South; & shows, what is proved by many other facts, that Crawford is by no means popular in that part of the country. Is it not equally true that Adams is unpopular with many at the North? — Maine, under the guidance of

[35] See Mrs. St. J. Ravenel, *Life and Times of William Lowndes*, 223-229; T. D. Jervey, *Robert Y. Hayne and His Times*, 125-128.

King & Holmes[36], will, I fear, go in favour of some southern man — & the same feeling prevails to a certain extent in Massachusetts — Holmes King, & their party in Maine are probably against him — Among the Massachusetts members who are here Russell[37] is understood to bear him no good will & he is a man of some weight. But New York & Pennsylvania are the two great states that must settle this point after all — The Bucktails are generally considered as favourable to Adams; but I have no great opinion of the political integrity of some of their leaders — I believe them to be in the market, at the command of the highest bidder, attached to no individual, but ready to join the strongest party —

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

Washington January 3d 1822

Dear father,

Since writing the above, I have heard more in the subject to which it relates than I have time at present to communicate. Mr. Calhoun, Secretary of War, has been lately waited upon by certain members of Congress from Pennsylvania and New York, & requested to be considered as a candidate for the Presidency — to which it, is said, he con-

[36] Senator John Holmes of Maine. If Plumer is here referring to Senator Rufus King of New York, who was born in Maine (then part of Massachusetts), he is in error. King did not regard Adams as a strong candidate, but Adams was the only northern candidate and King preferred him to the "black Candidates". *Life and Correspondence of Rufus King*, (C. R. King, ed.), VI, 507-508. See also Martin Van Buren, *Autobiography*, American Historical Association, *Annual Report, 1918*, II, 131-132, 140.

[37] Jonathan Russell, minister to Norway and Sweden, 1814-1818, and commissioner to negotiate the treaty of peace with Great Britain at Ghent in 1814; elected a representative to the Seventeenth Congress.

sented[38] —this, of course, created great surprise, & some alarm among the friends of Mr. Adams, to whose election he had heretofore been considered, by the best informed, as favourable — Nothing has been said or thought of, for some days past, but the Presidential election, & almost everybody has been sounded on the subject — Being at the War Office today, I took advantage of some enquiries of Mr. Calhoun, to introduce the subject of his being a Candidate, & had with him a very long, & apparently free conversation in this interesting topic — He began with stating that he had been for years in favour of giving to the North the next President, leaving us to select him; that his own wishes had always been in favour of Mr. Adams, on whom he pronounced a very warm eulogium as a man of talents, of integrity, & correct political opinions — that his opponent, Crawford, was the reverse of all this, a man whose course he could not approve, & with whom he could not act — that there were many at the south who thought with him on all these points, & were ready to support Mr. Adams, if he could be supported with the United force of the north — but that without this support from us, his case was hopeless — that it began to be believed in the south that Mr. Adams was rather unpopular in New England, & would be deserted by New York & Pennsylvania — that in consequence of this Crawford was gaining strength in the middle states, & would certainly secure a majority throughout the Union, if some more popular man could not be nominated, to prevent these deserters from the north falling into the scale of the Treasury candidate — that with these views, Lowndes had been nominated, by about one third of the South Carolina state legislature —

[38] See William M. Meigs, *Life of Calhoun*, I, 290-291.

that the vote would have been in his favour, but he was considered as too strongly attached to Mr. Adams to run against him — that he & Lowndes were friends, & had had an explaination on the subject (what this explaination was he did not say)[39] that the nomination had taken place prematurely & without Lowndes' knowledge — that this state of things placed him in a new & awkward situation. — that it had changed the whole aspect of affairs — that since the meeting of Congress he had been called upon to know what course he would pursue — the remarks which followed, & which related to what would be his future conduct in this affair, I am not certain that I can correctly state, or that I clearly understood them — the impression however on my mind, at the time, was that, if he was a candidate, it was rather against Crawford than Adams, & with a view to prevent the election of the former, if the latter was not likely to succeed — It was easy however to see that the thought of being President, had taken full possession of his mind, & the question with him was whether at the next or the following election — He dwelt with evident complacency on the objections which were made to Adams, such as the odium connected with his father's administration, his having formerly been a Federalist, & his supposed approbation of the proposed restriction on Missouri — He said much of his own friendship for the north — that his education had been northern,[40] his politics, his feelings, his views, & his sympathies were all northern — On the whole, after a conversation of more than an hour, in which he proposed to speak with perfect candour & to desire no

[39] See footnote 35, above.

[40] Calhoun entered the Junior class at Yale in 1802 and was graduated with distinction on September 12, 1804.

concealment, I left him with great doubts as to his real views, but impressed finally with the opinion that he would push for the Presidency now, if circumstances favoured; & if not, that he would make a merit of withdrawing for the present with an intention to come forward at some future & more auspicious juncture — In my view, his prospect of present success is very small, & the eagerness with which he grasps at the splendid phantom which plays before his eyes, is a proof of equal ambition & want of judgment — or rather of the blindness of self-love — For if South Carolina were to chose the President, Mr. Lowndes' chance of success would be equal, & Mr. Cheves[41] probably superior to Mr. Calhoun, & the same would be true in a majority of the states — I intend to see him again on this subject, &, if possible, obtain from him something more distinct as to the future —

From Mr. Calhoun's office, I went to the Department of State — the conversation which I had with Mr. Adams was neither so long, nor so interesting as that with Mr. Calhoun — As the latter told me expressly that he had no secrets, & wished no concealment, I repeated to Mr. Adams the substance of that he had said to me on the subject. Mr. Adams said that he always considered Calhouns & his friends as friendly to him — but that this late movement had puzzled him; & that he had received no explaination of it till this which I gave him — He said that an elaborate system had been long in full operation to degrade & vilify him; & by every artifice to divert the public attention from him to other men — that he had done nothing in his own defence, but trusted wholly to his public acts for the ex-

[41] Langdon Cheves, former member of congress and president of the Bank of the United States.

plaination of his views & character, — that he had rather go at once into private life than make any bargain, or come under any obligation to a single individual, though that individual could make him President of the United States — that he must be free, or he would be nothing — that he had made no pledges with any party — that the Bucktails had made advances to him, while they were in a minority; but he had given them no promises — that he thought them less likely to be his friends than the Clintonians, who were in their feelings & their views friendly to a northern man, while the Bucktails had proved, in the Missouri controversy, & on other occasions, that their leaning was to the South — that Clinton being now done, the Bucktails, with Van Beuren at their head, (who, by the way, is perhaps the greatest manager here,)[42] had come on, in a body, to make their fortunes by joining the strongest party, & that for the present they declared for no one in particular, but were waiting, & watching the progress of events — He said that he had been repeatedly urged to suffer his friends to come out & nominate him, to refute the calumnies which had been spread, & to set forth his claims & pretensions to the Presidency; but that he had always told them that it was too soon — but since steps had been taken, by other candidates, bringing them directly before the public, he should no longer object to a nomination, if his friends thought it necessary — that, if done at all, it should begin with the Republican members of the Massachusetts legislature — that the presence of the Federalists in such a caucus ought to be avoided, as likely to do much more hurt than good[43] — I told him I would write to Boston on the

[42] An early recognition of the political skill of Martin Van Buren.
[43] *Cf.* J. Q. Adams, *Memoirs*, V, 477-478.

subject, & have done so, to Mr. Fuller,[44] a member of our House, who has gone home in consequence of sickness in his family — I suggested to him, in my letter, the idea of a nomination, but without recommending it; telling him at the same time to set the Newspapers in motion if nothing more was done — I think the same should be done in New Hampshire; & that a well written article in this subject in Hill's Paper[45] would be of service not only at home, but in other states — Would it not be advisable for you to write something for this purpose? —

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

WASHINGTON January 28th 1822

DEAR FATHER,

. . . . . .

The talk about the next President has in a considerable degree subsided — The attempt to settle the question now, seems to be pretty generally condemned as hasty & premature — Most of those who were supposed to be concerned in starting it here, now deny having any agency in it. There are some further facts in relation to this subject, derived from authentic sources, which I will state in some future letter — With respect to the state of feeling in Massachusetts, Mr. Fuller, who has just returned from Boston, informs me that the Republicans of that state, with the exception of a very few, are warmly in favour of Mr. Adams, & that it would have been easy to obtain a

[44] Timothy Fuller. Adams had previously discussed this proposal with Fuller. *Ibid.*, V, 468-469.

[45] Isaac Hill, editor of the *New Hampshire Patriot*. Hill threw his support to Crawford. His letter of April 22, 1824, in support of the caucus nomination of Crawford is given below.

nomination, quite unanimous, from the Republican members of the Legislature, if it had been thought proper at this time — but that they would probably do no more than have, at some of their caucuses for other purposes, a sort of informal understanding, but no direct vote, on the subject. . . .

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

WASHINGTON, December 4th 1822

DEAR FATHER,

. . . . . .

The whole talk here is respecting the next President. I saw a private letter this morning from Ohio, which states that Mr. Clay's friends are taking great pains to get him nominated in that state by the legislature now in session — but that they are in favour of some man from the free states, Clinton or Adams — that they prefer the former; but will support the latter, if it should appear, as it certainly will, that Clinton has no chance of success.[46] . . .

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

WASHINGTON Dec. 6 1822

DEAR FATHER,

I have been looking over such parts of Mr. Adams book respecting the Fisheries & the Mississippi as I had not be-

[46] Edward King, writing from Gallipolis, Ohio, November 24, 1822, to his father, Senator Rufus King, expressed very nearly the sentiments here given by Plumer. It is possible that this was the letter to which Plumer referred. See *Life and Correspondence of Rufus King* (C. R. King, ed.), VI, 487.

fore seen.[47] It bears throughout the impress of his powerful & ardent mind — He has come out of this controversy, not merely with success, but in triumph. All those with whom I have conversed speak of it as placing him upon higher ground than he ever before occupied. Judge Barton[48] of Missouri told me that the whole intrigue was understood in the Western States in it's true light — & that he had no doubt it was one of the artifices of Clay to render Adams unpopular & advance his own pretensions to the Presidency; but that it had produced the opposite effect. — It is reported that the Legislature of Missouri will nominate Clay as President at their present session — This is not improbable — They are not a little indebted to him for their admission into the Union upon terms which they consider more favourable than the north was willing to allow — Another rumour is that the friends of Adams & Clay will unite, Adams to be President & Clay Vice President — But I think this extremely improbable; & merely notice it among the rumours of the day.[49]

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

WASHINGTON December 10th 1822

DEAR FATHER,

. . . . . .

You are correct in supposing that the presidential election will engage much of the time & attention of the mem-

[47] *The duplicate Letters, the Fisheries and the Mississippi. Documents relating to the Transactions at the Negotiations of Ghent* (Collected and published by John Quincy Adams). Washington, 1822. Also note in J. Q. Adams, *Memoirs*, VI, 118.

[48] David Barton, senator from December 3, 1821, to March 3, 1831.

[49] *Cf.* J. Q. Adams, *Memoirs*, VI, 114.

bers of Congress — You will see, by the letter of General Smyth of Virginia that he has commenced an attack on Mr. Adams, for his conduct while in the Senate[50] — It may indeed be said to be an attack upon you almost as much as upon Mr. Adams, since your name is quoted in conjunction with his in almost every case — Indeed, I might take some portion of it to myself since he seems determined to make the son responsible for the acts of his father — It seems as if the enemies of Mr. Adams were determined to make him President, so injudicious & so unsuccessful have they been in their attacks upon him — nothing that he ever did himself, has raised him so much, in public estimation, as his controversy with Russell[51] — and this letter of Smyth, as far as it goes, will have the same effect. It is generally condemned here, as equally imprudent & impotent — Mr. Adams is not to be made President, because he voted against wearing crape! & the man who makes this objection has himself repeatedly refused to wear crape when the House has voted to do so on account of the death of its members! —

Mr. Clay's friends are endeavouring to get him nominated in the Western States — The Kentucky Legislature has already done so.[52] In Ohio, great exertions are making to produce a similar result — but with what success is not

[50] For further information on the controversy between Smyth and Adams, see *ibid.*, VI, 120, 121, 124-127; Josiah Quincy, *Life of John Quincy Adams*, 130-132; *Niles' Register*, XXIII, 289; J. Q. Adams, *Writings* (Worthington C. Ford, ed.), VII, 335-354.

[51] The correspondence between Jonathan Russell and Adams over the negotiation of the Treaty of Ghent is published in *Niles' Register*, XXII, 197-220.

[52] A full account of the nomination of Clay by the Kentucky legislature on November 18, 1822, is given in *Niles' Register*, XXIII, 245.

yet known.[53] In Missouri the same attempt was made — but has failed — Col. Benton, one of their Senators, instead of coming here at the commencement of the Session, went to their state legislature then in session, & after much exertion obtained a meeting of the members — who determined, but without taking any direct vote, that it was inexpedient to make any nomination — The candidates spoken of in this meeting were Clay & Claiborne — a circumstance which shows, in addition to a thousand others, the unpopularity of Mr. Crawford — Mr. Clay's plan seems to be to make a Western party who shall be devoted to him — & to use this party as circumstances may require — to make him president if possible — & if not, to make the best bargain they can for him — to make him either Vice President, or Secretary of State. Some of the Western members who are friendly to Adams & Clay propose a union of their forces. But besides other objections to this course, it would, in my opinion, be very dangerous — Clay, as Vice President, might be of great service to the administration, & secure the cooperation of Congress & the good will of the people — or, what appears to me more probable, he might put himself at the head of the opposition, & at the end of the first four years supersede Mr. Adams, as Mr. Jefferson did his father. Again, if Clay is Vice President, what shall be done with Calhoun? If made Secretary of State, he & Clay will, of course, be at the head of two parties, with one of whom the President must take part, & encounter the opposition of the other. But this is speculating on remote contingencies. . . .

[53] See Eugene H. Roseboom, "Ohio in the Presidential Election of 1824", *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Quarterly*, XXVI, 170-171.

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

WASHINGTON December 15th 1822

DEAR FATHER,

. . . . . .

The report here is that, if Mr. Crawford is President, Mr. Holmes of Maine will be sent Minister to Russia, to which power it is understood the question of our northern boundary is to be referred in case it cannot be settled by direct negociation between the parties, which is not probable.[54] This appointment is, of course, conjectural — but it is very generally believed that the zeal of Mr. Holmes for Mr. Crawford's election has some such interested motive.

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

WASHINGTON December 21st 1822

DEAR FATHER,

. . . . . .

Notwithstanding what I wrote you respecting Missouri, it appears that at a subsequent meeting of Members of the Legislature, Mr. Clay was nominated for the President.[55] We have just received information that he has failed in Ohio — the meeting called for the purpose of nominating him determined, by a small majority, that it was inexpedient to make any nomination at this time — It is said those opposed to Clay were favourable to Clinton, & next to him to Mr. Adams. I had a conversation the other day with Mr. Adams on this subject. He thinks

[54] As late as 1828 the Czar of Russia was considered as a possible arbitrator between the United States and Great Britain in the dispute over the northeastern boundary. See J. Q. Adams, *Memoirs*, VII, 515.

[55] See note in *Niles' Register*, XXIII, 245.

Clay's plan is to get what support he can — to prevent a choice by the Electors — & to make his bargain in the House — With nine Western States to support him, he would either make Crawford's friends join him, & thus become President — or, if Crawford should be strongest in the House, he would consent to his being President upon condition that he should himself be made Secretary of State, &, of course, heir apparent to the Presidency.

Mr. Adams spoke of Gen. Smyth's attack upon him; & said you were as much concerned with it, as he was; as your name appeared with his, in almost every vote. He is writing an answer to Smyth — but I rather dissuaded him from it, under an idea that it might look, on his part, like too great a fondness for controversy — Yet the importance of the subject, & the official character of his assailant, may perhaps render necessary, & would certainly excuse some reply —

He said that Clay was at the bottom of Russell's attack on him — & that if Clay came out, as he hoped he would, he had it in his power, & was determined to give him as severe a dressing as he had given Russell — that in the former controversy he had purposely spared Clay, & confined his refutation to Russell; but that it was for no want of matter against the former, who was, in fact, as vulnerable as the latter —

I told him what I had heard Mr. Lowndes say respecting his (Adams') coming into the Cabinet[56] — He said that the President had never explained to him his motives in making him Secretary of State. — that he had no doubt that Clay laid claims to the office, & was offended that he did not get it —but that Clay had then no fear that Adams

[56] See footnote 9, above.

would be in his way to the Presidency, & regarded that appointment as less dangerous to him than that of Crawford would have been — & that the latter was of the same opinion — but that both of them soon began to apprehend danger, &, though hostile to each other, in other respects, had combined, on all occasions, & with unwearied industry, to crush him — He did not understand that Crawford wished himself to be Secretary of State; but merely to keep Clay out, & introduce somebody who would not be dangerous to him. If with this view, Mr. Crawford favoured the appointment of Mr. Adams, it was certainly a most hazardous experiment. — Mr. Adams was of opinion that whoever may be president, the next administration will have to encounter a regular & formidable opposition — Of this I think there can be little doubt.

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

DEAR FATHER, WASHINGTON December 27th 1822

. . . . . .

Mr. Crawford, Secretary of the Treasury, spent nearly four months, of this recess, in Georgia, & took occasion frequently & strongly to express his opinion on the merit of the candidates, & his wishes as to who should be elected. Mr. Cuthbert,[57] one of the members who is re-elected, told me that he was opposed on the ground that he was unfriendly to Mr. Crawford — that this was not true; & that Mr. Crawford, being informed of it, went about the country contradicting the report, & expressing his wish that Cuthbert should be elected. Indeed from all I can learn Crawford was absent from his duty here a term which en-

[57] Alfred Cuthbert.

titled him to a salary of two thousand dollars, for the express purpose of putting down his enemy Governor Clark,[58] & securing the election to Congress of men favourable to his pretensions to the Presidency — in both of which it is said he has succeeded. . . .

S. HALE TO WILLIAM PLUMER JR.

KEENE N. H. Jany 27, 1823.

DEAR SIR,

. . . . . .

Mr. Adams gains ground daily in the consideration of his fellow citizens. His reply to Clay was pithy, that to Smyth overwhelming. Could he stop here, he will have done himself much good by writing. I fear he will be led too far, and that his enemies have a plan to irritate and entangle him. Did not the meeting between him and Smyth result as the latter wished & intended? When old John[59] was at the bar, his antagonists used to put him in a passion and thus gain an easy victory. . . .

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

WASHINGTON December 3d 1823.

DEAR FATHER,

The first question on the meeting of the House was who should be Speaker. Clay, Taylor, & Barbour were the only candidates. The former was opposed solely upon the ground that by making him Speaker we should be advancing him to the Presidency — giving him a testimonial of

[58] See footnote 12, above.
[59] John Adams.

our high confidence — & thus throwing ourselves unawares into his scale. I do not however think there is much in this view of the subject — & at any rate it was obvious to all impartial observers that Clay would be Speaker, & that no combination that could be formed could prevent it — the dictate of prudence then was let him be unanimously elected — & there could then be no pretence that those who voted for him intended by that vote to recommend him to the people as President — This course would have been adopted but for the obstinacy of Barbour & the Virginians — Taylor finding the struggle would be useless, & that he could not probably command at the first ballot more than fifty votes, wisely declined — & his friends all voted for Clay — who had 139 votes, & Barbour 42 — There was no other candidate.[60] If Clay had been out of the question Taylor would undoubtedly have been elected, by a considerable majority. — It has occurred to me as possible, perhaps probable, that Taylor declined, with an understanding, on the part of Clay. That after filling the Chair for a time, he should resign & give his support to Taylor as his successor. But this is mere conjecture.

I called yesterday upon Mr. Adams. He enquired particularly for you — I found him in good health & spirits — & had some conversation with him on the Presidential election — He said nothing directly as to his own prospects — but discussed the merits & the chances of the other candidates. I was surprised to find that he (& I find many other people talk in the same way) considered Jackson as a very prominent & formidable candidate. And what was more, he not only considered him as strong, but also as

[60] *Cf. Annals of Congress*, 18 Cong., 1 Sess., I, 794-795; *Niles' Register*, XXV, 209, 222-223.

meritorious — He had, he said, no hesitation in saying that he preferred him decidedly to any of the other candidate — (He no doubt made a tacit reservation in his own favour) — that Jackson would administer the government with perfect integrity & disinterestedness, free from all bargains, compromises, coalitions, or corruption — & this, he added, with great emphasis, is more than I can say of either Crawford, Calhoun, Clay, or Clinton — He thought Jackson would have all the Western States, if it was ascertained that Clay could not succeed, & some of them at any rate; that Pennsylvania would declare for him — & in short, that he had the mass of the people with him everywhere — I objected to him his rashness & indiscretion — He said that Jackson's character was not understood in that respect — that no man acted with more deliberation or listened more readily to advice — but that when his decision was once formed he was inflexible — that he executed his designs with a rapidity which was mistaken for rashness, but which was in fact the result of the most profound calculation — that he (Adams) had been obliged to examine very minutely all those parts of Jackson's conduct which were thought most exceptionable, & that whatever occasional hastiness there might be in the manner, there was nothing in the matter which he could condemn — nothing which did not rest in the soundest principles of justice, policy, the law of nations, & the public good — He might perhaps, as President, be guilty of some trifling indiscretions; but they would not affect the course of public measures, nor prevent his administering the government with wisdom & integrity.[61]

[61] There is no record in Adams's *Memoirs* of this very interesting conversation. At an earlier date, Adams had praised Jackson highly in rec-

Mr. Adams said little of Mr. Crawford — more of Mr. Clay, — & a good deal of Mr. Calhoun — He said that though Clay would, no doubt, manage in his way, there was in him a root of principle, which made him a much safer man than Crawford or Calhoun — He then spoke at some length of the conduct of Mr. Calhoun — said, that, under the guise of friendship, he had been labouring incessently to injure him & advance himself — that this underhand course was unworthy of a man of talents & integrity; & that it would imply a want of moral feeling in the people of the United States to advance a man who had taken such a course, & who (aside of that,) had really less merit than any of the other candidates, to the Presidency — & that he did not believe that Mr. Calhoun himself entertained any very sanguine expectations of success — that his present object seemed to be to get what strength he could, & then join the party that would give him the best terms. He said he was not willing even to suspect Mr. Calhoun of such a course — & the time had been when he would not, for a moment, have entertained such a suspicion, — but that he knew of no other way in which his conduct of late could be explained — He thought also that Calhoun had another course in view which was to put himself at the head [of] an opposition to the next administra-

ommending him to Monroe for the post of minister to Mexico. *Memoirs*, VI, 128-129. Daniel Webster wrote to his brother, February 22, 1824: "General Jackson's manners are more presidential than those of any of the candidates. He is grave, mild, and reserved. My wife is for him decidedly". Daniel Webster, *Private Correspondence* (Fletcher Webster, ed.), I, 346. *Cf.* also the favorable description of Jackson by Senator Elijah H. Mills of Massachusetts, in a letter of January 22, 1824, published in the Massachusetts Historical Society, *Proceedings*, XIX, 40-41. The Tennessee legislature had passed resolutions, July 20, 1823, nominating Jackon for the presidency. *Niles' Register*, XXII, 402; Bassett, *Life of Andrew Jackson*, I, 328; Parton, *Life of Andrew Jackson*, III, 18-21.

tion, in case he did not himself form a part of it — that some of his late measures seemed designed expressly to make difficulty for the next President, whoever he might be — He here alluded to some cabinet secrets, which I did not feel at liberty to ask him to unfold —

With respect to Mr. Monroe's views on the subject of the Presidential election, I told him that the President was said to favour Mr. Calhoun — He said that Mr. Calhoun's friends had very industriously circulated that report — but that the President had repeatedly said that he should give no opinion on the subject — that all the candidates possessed his confidence; & that he should scrupulously abstain from taking any part in the struggle which might ensure for the succession —

Some part of this conversation was confidential on the part of Mr. Adams — & I did not understand by any means that he spoke publicly of Mr. Calhoun with the same freedom as he used in addressing me — But it was apparent that he had no longer the same confidence in him that he had two years ago — &, if President, I much doubt whether he would make Calhoun his prime minister — He seemed to doubt his integrity — &, as he truly observed, without this, no man is fit for any public station.

From this whole conversation I drew the inferrence that Adams wished to advance Jackson, in case he could not himself be President;[62] & even that he would consent to serve under him in his present office as Secretary of State. This however is mere conjecture, as nothing was said from

[62] On September 6, 1824, William B. Lewis, one of Jackson's most confidential friends, wrote to Stephen Simpson, editor of the *Columbian Observer*: "I have no doubt, if Adams cannot be elected himself, that he would prefer the election of General Jackson to that of any other person". Nathan Sargent, *Public Men and Events*, I, 58.

which such an inferrence could, with any plausibility, be deduced — But he seemed evidently anxious to advance Jackson, & to depress Calhoun. He also spoke with great liberality of Mr. Clay — We were interrupted by the arrival of company — & I left him without making several enquiries which I intended to have put. . . .

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

Washington December 10th 1823

Dear father,

. . . . . .

With respect to a Congressional nomination, I can find very few members in favor of it — It is said the Western people are all against it. Mr. Adams' friends certainly are — Mr. Calhoun's, I think, are — Jackson's certainly are — who then is in favour of it? It is said Mr. Crawford's friends are — but they are far from being a majority of Congress — & will surely not venture on such a measure in the present state of public feeling — My own opinion is that the members of Congress will wait to see what course public opinion will take in the several states. The legislatures of nearly all the states are in session during the winter — At Boston, at Albany, at Harrisburgh, at Richmond, in all the great states, this subject will engage the attention of the members of their respective legislatures — public opinion in those states will take some definite form — & as these state legislatures shall decide, you will find the members of Congress disposed to act — so that, in my view of the subject, the question will be settled in the states, where it ought to be; and not in Congress, where it should come only in the last resort. . . .

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

WASHINGTON December 12th 1823.

DEAR FATHER,

. . . . . .

I do not think that DeWitt Clinton, or his friends have much expectation that he will be President at the next election — but they intend, if possible to secure the votes of New York, to be given, if judged proper, to him, or if not to him, to some person who will bring him into the new administration, as Secretary of State, Secretary of the Treasury, or some such office.[63] In short, if New York can be made to do as he says, he calculates that it will be in his power to make a President. I find among the Yorkers a strong disposition not to throw away their votes — they are determined to make their great state to be felt in the election —

The friends of Mr. Crawford here are making great efforts to have a Congressional Caucus without delay — They find public opinion turning against them in the States — & they hope to recover it by a congressional nomination, even though the number attending the meeting should be small. Among the friends of the other candidates, there is much diversity of opinion as to the course most proper to be pursued — Some are for attending & voting down the caucus — others prefer staying away & taking no part — others say we ought to meet the day preceeding that appointed for the caucus, & vote that it is inexpedient to call a convention — after which Crawford's friends might go on if they saw fit — Their object in having a caucus so early is to forestall public opinion, & to give an impulse

[63] Clinton later declined Adams's offer of the ministry at London. See Plumer's letter of March 2, 1825, below.

here, which shall be felt through the Union. But I think they will hardly feel themselves strong enough to venture into Caucus yet. . . .

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

Washington December 22d 1823.

Dear father,

. . . . . .

A great effort has been made here by Mr. Crawford's friends to get a Caucus nomination in his favour. Saturday last was fixed upon as the day of meeting — but it was found that not more than sixty members could be induced to pledge themselves to attend — & it was uncertain how some of these would vote when they got there — The design was therefore abandoned for the present. The members from New Hampshire had a meeting on Friday to see what course they would take — & we voted unanimously that we would not attend a Caucus at the present time — Bell, Whipple, & Bartlett[64] thought it probable they should attend one, if called towards the close of the session. They all declared themselves in favour of Adams, except Bartlett, who expressed no opinion as to the candidates — Bell said that next to Adams he preferred Crawford — & from various indications, which he has given I should not be surprised to find him, before the session closes, an avowed Crawfordite.

The great object in calling a caucus so early in the session is to influence the State Legislature, & particularly the State of New York, the main pivot on which the whole election is supposed to turn. — In the meantime, the State

[64] Senator Samuel Bell, Representatives Thomas Whipple, Jr., and Ichabod Bartlett.

legislatures seem to be setting themselves against the Caucus system altogether. Tennessee & Maryland have adopted resolutions against it[65] —

I forget whether I told you that General Jackson is making up with his old enemies — He has reconciled himself with Gen. Scott, with Senator Benton, & with Gen. Cocke![66] . . . It is said, that Cocke was obliged to promise that he would support Jackson, for the Presidency, before he could be reelected. It is not probable that such a reconciliation would be very sincere. . . .

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

Washington December 26th 1823.

Dear father,

. . . . . .

It is not a little curious that while so much is said about a President, no candidate for the Vice-Presidency has yet been named — not but what we sometimes hear individuals mentioned (& I have heard your name among the rest) — but no one seems fixed upon by any party, or in connexion with either of the candidates for President. Yet it can hardly be doubted that Mr. Crawford's friends, who were, & still are, so eager to go into Caucus, have selected their man for Vice-President, as well as President. But not a word is said by them on the subject — at least, nothing publicly — I have however been told, within a few days, that, with a view to gain New York, they intended to make

[65] *Cf. Life and Correspondence of Rufus King* (C. R. King ed.), VI, 538-539; *Niles' Register*, XXV, 114, 137-139, 249, 260.

[66] The story of Jackson's reconciliation with Henry Clay, Thomas H. Benton, and General Winfield Scott is related in Parton, *Life of Andrew Jackson*, III, 44-48.

Gov. Yates[67] Vice President, Tompkins will not probably be thought of, having served his eight years, & having besides much fallen both in fortune & in fame. There is certainly some policy in this offer to Yates, & it may even have the effect to turn the nicely balance scales in that important state. . . .

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

WASHINGTON December 31, 1823

DEAR FATHER,

. . . . . .

I had some conversation a few days since with Mr. Calhoun on the Presidential question. He is decidedly opposed to a caucus — He says that it is not a question of men, but of principle, between those who are willing to trust the election to the people at large, & those who wish to govern the people through the agency of a few intriguing politicians in the several states. I cannot help regarding it in the same point of view — If it be once considered as a settled point, that no man can be President, who is not nominated by Congress, — in other words, if such nomination is to settle the question, — men will no longer seek to acquire public confidence by public services alone, but will bend all their powers to secure personal favour with the members of Congress, — certain in this way of succeeding in the great object of their ambition, & little scrupulous of the means by which such favour is to be secured. Without saying that a Caucus is never proper, I am certain that it is not always necessary — And if the practice is ever to be discontinued, it ought to be before it has

[67] Joseph C. Yates, elected governor in 1822; served for one term, from January 1, 1823, to January 1, 1825.

acquired, if it has not indeed already, the force of a prescription in its favour.

Mr. Clay also declares against a Caucus — but I am told that Crawford's friends have flattered him with an idea in case the latter is withdrawn, they will support him — & that his opposition to a caucus is therefore provisional merely, & would in that event be removed — they have thrown out the same hint to some of Mr. Adams' friends, in hopes of drawing them also into a Caucus. Indeed I have little doubt that the Virginians, would prefer Mr. Adams, next to Mr. Crawford, to either of the other candidates. . . .

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

WASHINGTON January 1, 1824.

DEAR FATHER,

. . . . . .

I went at twelve o'clock, according to custom, to the President's Levee — The weather was warm, but rainy & unpleasant — There was a vast crowd of people there, & I passed an hour very pleasantly in the crowd. Mrs. Monroe did not show herself on the occasion, being out of health, & the company was received by the President, & her daughter, Mrs Hay —

While there I was informed that the Virginia Legislature had rejected, by a majority of one, the resolutions in favour of a Congressional Caucus[68] — If this be true, & they adhere to their votes, it will go far towards putting down a Caucus here — If Pennsylvania & New York would

[68] *Cf.* J. Q. Adams, *Memoirs*, VI, 226; *Niles' Register*, XXV, 281-284, 288.

declare against it, there would be an end of the matter — But perhaps the most that can be expected of them is to express no opinion on the subject either way —

Mr. Calhoun takes great pains to secure the support of the Federal Party — & the leaders are said to be generally in his favour. Mr. Adams told me that no man in Washington seemed to be so much disappointed, or chagrined, as Mr. Calhoun, at the success of the Republicans, in Massachusetts, last spring, in electing Eustis Governor[69] — He said the Republicans might support Mr. Adams; but the Federalists, who were the majority, would give him the preference — and yet we are told that Mr. Adams, who has apparently taken pains to affront the Federalists, is the Federal candidate; while Calhoun, Crawford, & Clay, who has on various occasions, sought the favour of that party, are genuine Republicans — . . .

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

Washington January 15th 1824.

Dear father,

. . . . . .

But little definite, is now said respecting a caucus — Pennsylvania seems to be against it — but proposes a convention to consist of Delegates from all parts of the Union[70] — an impracticable expedient, but one which may

[69] William Eustis, elected to the Seventh and Eighth Congresses; secretary of war from March 7, 1809, to December 19, 1813; minister to the Netherlands, December 19, 1814, to May 5, 1818; again elected to the Seventeenth Congress; elected governor of Massachusetts in 1823 and served until his death, February 6, 1825.

[70] An interesting forecast of the national convention. The full text of the Pennsylvania proposal is given in *Niles' Register*, XXV, 306-307.

serve to divert attention from a Congressional Caucus — I have not had much conversation lately on the subject with our members -- but I do not think any of them would go into a partial caucus. Bartlett, I am told, says he will not go into caucus unless it is generally attended by the Republican members — If he holds to this ground, it is pretty certain that he will not attend a caucus — For from the Western States alone there are not less than fifty members who declare that they will in no event attend a caucus — Nearly all the Pennsylvanians are against it — a part of the New Yorkers, Vermont, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, & indeed nearly all those who are not pledged to support Mr. Crawford. . . .

CHARLES RICH[71] TO WILLIAM PLUMER JR.

Sir Feby 4th 1824.

Permit to enquire whether you deem it expedient under existing circumstances, to attend a Congressional meeting, should one be called, for the purpose of nominating candidates for President and Vice President? — also whether your colleagues will attend or not?

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

Dear father, Washington February 5th—1824.

. . . . . .

Much has been lately said, & something done in relation to a Caucus — It seems certain that one will be held by Mr. Crawford's friends — It is equally certain that a large

[71] Representative from Vermont.

majority of Congress will refuse to attend — Measures have been taken to ascertain the numbers on both sides — & there will probably be a publication, by the opposers of the caucus, on the subject, in a few days, perhaps tomorrow — It is said that the caucus will be held on the 14th instant — others say not till April — I hope it will be called at the earliest date — for the sooner it is over, the sooner measures will be taken, if not to form a union of the other candidates, at least to defeat the election of Mr. Crawford — My own opinion is that some compromise will be effected — &, whenever that is done, Adams will be found the strongest man; & must, of course, in the event of such union, be the antagonist candidate — There are many symptoms of such an event. Calhoun's papers no longer attack Mr. Adams; & his friends speak of him in a different manner from what they did at the commencement of the session. I had a long talk with Mr. Adams yesterday on this subject — He says he has lately had offers, or overtures, from nearly all the candidates — Mr. Crawford's friends sent him a formal offer to make him Vice President, if his friends would support Mr. Crawford for President! The proposal was that the friends of both should go into caucus together, & nominate the two for these offices respectively — This was not a casual suggestion, but came in regular form from Crawford's friends — The answer was, that Mr. Adams claimed no office whatever — & that he never could consent to receive a nomination from a Congressional caucus, for any office, high or low — because his objections to such nominations rested upon principle; & these objections would be the same, whether he, or any other person, was nominated — As to being Vice President, under Mr. Crawford, he said that he could not

consent to any such arrangement, & should decline being a candidate for that office, if nominated.[72] . . .

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

DEAR FATHER, WASHINGTON February 9th 1824.

In the conversation with Mr. Adams, mentioned in my last, he seemed to consider Mr. Crawford as no longer a dangerous rival — & even expressed some apprehension that he would too soon withdraw from the contest — while Crawford stood against the world, it was necessary for all the other candidates to combine again him — & this union of interest produced a disposition to compromise & form a single party, in which each should have his due weight & influence — this had gone so far as to produce advances on the part of Calhoun's friends, & even of Mr. Clay's, towards a more intimate union, — to end, if possible, in presenting to the public but one candidate, or at most but two, to oppose Crawford — the advances on Calhoun's part were direct & formal, through intervention of some common friend — those from Clay, more remote & indefinite[73] — The whole was, as yet, in embryo; but enough had been shown to indicate a sence of weakness on the part of

[72] *Cf.* J. Q. Adams, *Memoirs*, VI, 244. On the same date as Plumer's letter, February 5, Romulus M. Saunders, representative from North Carolina, wrote to Thomas Ruffin of the hopes and plans of the caucus group. Thomas Ruffin, *Papers*, I, 288-289. The union of non-caucus candidates against Crawford was known to Crawford supporters as "The Holy Alliance." Henry Seawell to Ruffin, *ibid.*, I, 292-293. Nathaniel Macon's doubts as to the advisability of a caucus nomination are expressed in a letter of December 12, 1823, to Bartlett Yancey. *James Sprunt Historical Monographs*, No. 2, pp. 67-70.

[73] *Cf.* J. Q. Adams, *Memoirs*, VI, 241-242. Calhoun denied that there was any coalition between Adams and him. See John C. Calhoun, *Correspondence* (J. Franklin Jameson, ed.), American Historical Association, *Annual Report, 1899*, II, 217.

both these men — From Jackson's friends nothing had been heard — But it is quite evident that he is gaining no new strength, but rather declining — the novelty is wearing away — & though it is allowed that he will do well for Vice President, very few of our leading men think of him for any higher office — My own opinion is that Adams, Crawford, & Clay, if there is no choice by the people, will be the three highest candidates —

You will see by the Intelligencer,[74] that a Caucus is called to meet on the 14th instant — & also that a considerable number of Members have signed a paper declaring that out of 261 Members of Congress, there are 181 who will not attend a Caucus[75] — so that the meeting must be a thin one, consisting of the friends of Mr. Crawford alone — It is possible that a few of the 181 may attend; but I think this less probable than that the 81 will be there. I was much urged to answer for New Hampshire; & to sign the anti-caucus paper — but circumstances made it improper in my opinion — To ascertain what was the real feelings of my colleagues I got them all together a few days since — when, after a good deal of talk, they refused to authorize any person to speak for them, or give any assurances that they would not attend a caucus — They however all said that they did not intend to attend; & that, unless the caucus was general, they should not make a part of it. Governor Bell, contrary to my fears & expectations, came out openly & decidedly against a Caucus; & said he had made his mind up not to attend in any event — Parrot[76] expressed himself with nearly equal strength; as did Livermore & Matson —

[74] *National Intelligencer.*

[75] See *Niles' Register*, XXV, 370-371; Parton, *Life of Andrew Jackson*, III, 26.

[76] Senator John F. Parrott.

Harvey[77] was of the same opinion, though his usual caution kept him from speaking so decidedly — Whipple & Bartlett held back — especially the latter — Under these circumstances, I did not think it prudent to pledge myself for the final course of the deligation — I therefore wrote to the Committee, who were collecting this information, & who had written assurances from some one or more members from every state, that I deemed it inexpedient to attend a Caucus for the nomination of Candidates for President & Vice President; & gave it as my *opinion* that none of our deligation would attend — They had some hesitation, under these circumstances whether or not to include New Hampshire in their list; but they finally concluded to do it — & I have no doubt the event will justify them in so doing —

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

DEAR FATHER, WASHINGTON February 16th 1824.

The Caucus, so long expected, & so much the subject of conversation, was held on Saturday evening, the 14th instant. The friends of Mr. Crawford showed themselves weaker than ever their opponents had anticipated — There were sixty six members present — Of this number,

Mr. Crawford	62.
Mr. Adams	2.
Mr. Jackson	1.
Mr. Macon	1.
	66.

Two more votes, given by proxy, were also counted for Mr. Crawford, making his whole number sixty four.[78] . . .

[77] Representatives Arthur Livermore, Aaron Matson, and Matthew Harvey.

[78] Full accounts of this caucus are printed in *Niles' Register*, XXV, 388-393, 401-406.

It appears to me that Mr. Crawford will receive more injury than benefit from this partial nomination — It will, I think, have the effect of uniting the friends of the other candidates, if not to advance some one man, at least to put down Mr. Crawford — & there can be no doubt they are strong enough, even without any very intimate union, to do this.

I am uncertain whether I informed you of some conversations which I have lately had with several of Mr. Crawford's friends, going to prove that they give Mr. Adams the preference, next to their own candidates, to any of the others. I had a conversation with Mr. Burton[79] of North Carolina in which he said that, in case it became certain, or very probable that Crawford could not be elected the State of North Carolina would support Mr. Adams — that the Common People were for him now — & nothing would be easier than for a few men to give him the fifteen votes of that state — He wished me to ascertain, from Mr. Adams, whether it would be acceptable to him to have Mr. Crawford for Vice President, as he thought this ought to take place if Adams was President. I informed Mr. Adams of this — & afterwards advised Burton to see him. He accordingly went to Mr. Adams[80] — & after seeing him called upon Mr. Crawford, who, on being asked the question said that, if his friends thought it advisable, he was willing to become Vice President under Mr. Adams — whether this was said because he thought his friends would never consent to such an arrangement, & he could thus have the merit of making an offer, which he was certain he should never be called upon to perform, & so take

[79] Hutchins G. Burton.

[80] See J. Q. Adams, *Memoirs*, VI, 265.

credit for his disinterestedness, or whether he begins seriously to think that his chance of success is not worth contending for, I am unable to tell. . . .

The conversations to which I have here alluded were held the week of the caucus, but before that event — During these conversations, Mr. Adams told me, in confidence, that, if chosen President, he should retain the present members of the Cabinet, if they were willing to serve under him — so that there would be but one vacancy to fill — that of Secretary of State — but whether that would be filled by advancing Crawford or Calhoun, or some new man, he did not say. If a new man, I know of but two who deserve it, Dewit Clinton, & Henry Clay — against both strong objections lie — Clinton would make the President unpopular at the North, perhaps, in every part of the Union — & Clay, once Secretary of State, would be regarded by everybody as the next President —

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

DEAR FATHER, WASHINGTON February 20th 1824

. . . . . .

It begins now to be thought that Mr. Clay stands some chance of securing the State of New York — & that for this purpose his friends & Mr. Calhoun's will unite — It is apparent that the chance of the latter is worth very little. It will be nothing, if Pennsylvania should declare for Jackson, as it is thought the Harrisburgh convention will do. Should Jackson secure this great state, it will give him a firm footing — & put him in fact above Clay, Calhoun, or even Crawford — Others say that Calhoun has united himself with Jackson — & from some recent movements this

does not seem to be very improbable. In the midst of so many opposite opinions, it is not easy to form a probable conjecture as to what will be the result of the election. . . .

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

DEAR FATHER, WASHINGTON February 29th 1824

. . . . . .

Since I wrote you last respecting the Presidential election, some important changes have taken place. The friends of Mr. Calhoun in Pennsylvania having abandoned him for Gen. Jackson,[81] he may be considered virtually withdrawn from the course. His chance of success was never good, & it is now utterly hopeless — Yet his South Carolina friends still profess to cling to him. The truth is that the movement in Pennsylvania was made by the people altogether & not by the politicians. If Calhoun falls into the hands of Jackson it will be not a matter of choice with him, but of necessity — He would probably prefer an union with Adams or Clay — The accession of Pennsylvania to Jackson makes him a truly formidible candidate — By many it is thought that he will get, in addition to this great State, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama Missouri, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, & some even say Georgia. If so he will come highest into the House, or on the most favorable supposition, next to Adams — Is it not a bad omen that mere military glory, for he has no character or reputation, as a Statesman, should thus captivate the popular feeling, & throw the na-

[81] An interesting account of the development of the Jackson boom in Pennsylvania and the consequent decline of Calhoun's strength is given in Meigs, *Life of John C. Calhoun*, I, 290-310. See also, Bassett, *Life of Andrew Jackson*, I, 331-335; Parton, *Life of Andrew Jackson*, III, 28-30.

tion headlong into the arms of a military despot? I cannot yet believe that this will be the case — The fear of such an event has made Mr. Adams many friends. The North Carolinians & Georgians in the House say that if choice is between the two, they shall give the preference to Adams. The Members from Louisiana tell me that Mr. Adams is strong there — that if left to the People he would get two votes to one — but that as the electors are chosen by the legislature, they will probably vote for Clay or Jackson — When however it comes to the House, they intimate that they will not consider themselves bound to adhere to the same man whom their electors, thus chosen, & acting contrary to the known will of the people, may vote for.

In the meantime, Mr. Crawford gives no answer to the caucus committee — He is probably waiting to see what New York will do — & if that great state should declare for Adams, Crawford may be considered much in the same situation with Calhoun — All in fact turns upon that State. Clay is said to be very popular in the Western part of it — & Jackson's friends hope, by the aid of DeWit Clinton, to secure its votes for their candidate — but from all the accounts I can get Adams is the strongest man there.[82]. . .

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO SALMA HALE, KEENE, N. H.

Washington March 3d 1824.

Dear Sir,

. . . . . .

I cannot help regarding the popularity of Gen. Jackson, & the probability (certainly not a slight one now) that he

[82] The unsettled state of politics in New York is discussed at considerable length in J. D. Hammond, *History of Political Parties in New York,*

will be President, as extremely discreditable to the American people. . . .

Everything is here considered as depending upon New York — Should she declare for Adams, Crawford may be considered as, in effect, withdrawn from the contest, as he could not, in that event, even come into the house among the three highest. If he gets New York he comes into the House; but even then cannot be elected — If on the contrary Adams gets New York he will most probably be elected by the People; & in the House, supposing Crawford out of the way, there is no doubt of his success. . . .

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

WASHINGTON March 8th 1824.

DEAR FATHER,

. . . . . .

The presidential question still hangs in doubt. The number of Candidates is lessening — Mr. Calhoun is virtually, though not formally, withdrawn. It is not improbable that Clay will also be thrown out of the race. He is now endeavouring to secure the vote of New York — but in this I do not think he can succeed — If he does not, he may resign all hopes of being President at the next election. I saw, yesterday, a list of the members in the Ohio Legislature, in which every man's name was marked, according as he was inclined to favour either candidates — Adams & Clay had an equal number; & the remainder not more than

II, 125-132 and *passim.* See also *Life and Correspondence of Rufus King,* VI, 504, 518-520; Daniel Webster, *Private Correspondence,* I, 328-329; *Life of Thurlow Weed* (H. A. Weed, ed.), I, 102-138; D. S. Alexander, *Political History of the State of New York,* I, 321-343.

eight or ten, were distributed among the other candidates — Two tickets will be run in that state, one for Adams & one for Clay; & there is a fair chance that the Yankee interest will prevail[83] — If New York goes the same way, Adams is elected by the people. At this time, New York has only one wise course to pursue — & that is to make Adams president. The two other great states, Pennsylvania & Virginia, have both selected their candidates — If Crawford is chosen, he is the Virginia President; if Jackson, he owes his election essentially to Pennsylvania. If New York supports either of these she comes in to fight *under* the banners of her less powerful neighbours. But by nominating Adams, she secures his election, makes him *her* President, & thereby assumes at once that station, at the head of the Union, to which she has long aspired, & which she would in that event fairly occupy. . . .

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

DEAR FATHER, WASHINGTON March 8th 1824.

. . . . . .

In a conversation which I had last week with Mr. Adams, he informed me that he had lately been written to by a leading man in South Carolina, who stated that they were about to form an electoral ticket composed of persons friendly to his election — but they wanted first to know what were his opinions on the subject of the tariff — that they hoped he was against it altogether, but they would be satisfied if he declared himself friendly to a revision of the tariff, with a view to revenue alone. He said he

[83] *Cf.* J. Q. Adams, *Memoirs*, VI, 250, where Adams reports that Postmaster-General McLean made a similar statement to him.

thought himself called upon in honor to give an explicit answer to this enquiry — that he had told his correspondent that he was in favour of the revision, not upon the principle of revenue merely, but upon that of protection to American manufacturers — that such protection was required by the state of the country, & should be extended as far as was compatible with the due encouragement & protection of the other two great interests of the Community, agriculture & commerce. Whether the bill now before Congress went further than this, or fell short of it, he could not say, having never examined it.[84]

This explicit declaration of his opinion in favour of a certain degree of protection to manufactures will probably operate against him in the south, where a very strong feeling exists on this subject. It is another proof of the independence & manly spirit by which Mr. Adams is uniformly governed. I do not know that the letter will be published.

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

DEAR FATHER, WASHINGTON March 14th 1824

. . . . . .

Everything still remains uncertain with respect to New York — the accounts from that quarter are by no means favourable — The Senate has rejected the electoral law by a vote of 17 to 14. On a motion that it is expedient to pass an electoral law this session the vote was in the affirmative 16 to 15 — so that it is probable some other bill will

[84] Adams later expressed to Representative George McDuffie of South Carolina his satisfaction with the tariff act. *Ibid.*, VI, 353. He also explained his stand on the tariff to Senator James Barbour of Virginia. *Ibid.*, VI, 451.

be introduced — but it is uncertain whether any will pass both houses.[85] . . .

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

WASHINGTON April 1st 1824

DEAR FATHER,

. . . . . .

The election of governor does not appear so certain as we at first thought it: but still the probability is that Morril[86] is elected — There is one thing connected with this election which has excited some distrust. I find much interest taken, by certain persons here, in Morril's success — The friends of Mr. Crawford were constantly enquiring whether he would be elected, & expressed much anxiety that he should prevail — Now it is over, they speak of his success as the success of Crawford's party in New Hampshire — How is this? Is he a Crawfordite? Is this the ground upon which Hill[87] has supported him? I fear there is some secret understanding on this subject. It is certain that Crawford's friends here look upon Morril as their man. A Crawford ticket, known & avowed, could not run in New Hampshire — but the danger is that men will be

[85] An attempt was made to pass a bill providing for the choice of presidential electors by the people, instead of by the legislature. See J. D. Hammond, *History of Political Parties in New York*, II, 130-132, 140-154; Martin Van Buren, *Autobiography*, 142-144; *Life and Correspondence of Rufus King*, VI, 519-520.

[86] David Lawrence Morril was a member of the United States senate from 1817 to 1823. He was a candidate for governor of New Hampshire in 1824 and was elected by the convention, there being no choice by the people. Two years later he was elected to the same office by the people.

[87] Isaac Hill, editor of the *New Hampshire Patriot*. See footnote 93, below.

chosen for electors whose opinions are not known, & who, should circumstances favour Crawford, in November, would vote for him. We ought, therefore, in good reason, to bring before the public men whose opinions are known, & whose characters would secure them a general support. If, as seems at least possible, Morril & Hill are acting in concert on this subject, they ought to be watched.

Mr. Crawford has so far recovered as to ride out, & he came into the House today — His situation is such as to satisfy me that, if there were no other objection, he ought never to think of being President. He has lost entirely the use of one eye — & sees so imperfectly with the other, as not to know any person whose name is not announced to him — He did not know me when I spoke to him — While I stood talking with him, six or eight Members came up, all of them persons with whom he had been formerly well acquainted; yet he did not know one of them till some person mentioned their names as they shook hands with him. He walks slowly, & like a blind man — His feet were wrapped up with two or three thickness over his shoes — & he told me that they were cold & numb — His recollection seemed to be good, & he conversed freely — But it is the general impression that a slight return of his disorder would prove fatal to him[88] — It is eight or nine months since he was taken sick — & five or six since he was so far recovered as to come from Virginia to this city — nothing, but his being a candidate for the Presidency, has prevented the President from assigning, as he was bound by law to do, the duties of Secretary of the Treasury to some other person, temporarially, at first; & at the end of six months, to nominate some other man to the Senate to fill

[88] *Cf.* Plumer's letter of April 20, below.

the office[89] — How monies are drawn from the Treasury, or the necessary business done, nobody knows — It is not by Mr. Crawford — it is not by any other responsible person — There is a delicacy about mentioning these things publicly — but if the people knew the real state of Mr. Crawford's health, he would be no longer considered as a candidate. I do not believe he will be five months hence.

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

WASHINGTON April 9th 1824

DEAR FATHER,

. . . . . .

The question which is now most frequently asked is, who will Mr. Adams' friends support as Vice President? General Jackson is undoubtedly the best selection we can make, if he will stand, & if being Adams' most formidable rival (as he appears now to be) it be not bad policy to do anything which may advance his interest with the public.[90] Mr. Calhoun's friends wish us to support him — but there is some danger in this, as well as some impropriety. Another name, not much mentioned, but, in my opinion, preferable to any other, if Jackson is out of the case, is Mr.

[89] Plumer appears to be somewhat in error. The act states that "it shall be lawful" for the President to fill the vacancy temporarily but does not make it mandatory upon him to do so. See Act of May 8, 1792, U. S., *Statutes at Large*, I, 281. Amended by Act of February 13, 1795. *Ibid.*, I, 415.

[90] See J. Q. Adams, *Memoirs*, VI, 289; John A. Dix, *Memoirs*, II, 310-311. Senator Robert Y. Hayne, in March, 1824, predicted that the contest would be a close one between Jackson and Adams. Thomas Ruffin, *Papers*, I, 298-299. Willie P. Mangum was certain that Jackson could not be elected but he did not feel the same certainty concerning Adams. *Ibid.*, I, 300.

Macon — & it is a fact that some of his friends, though Crawfordites, wish us to support him — The result of the whole is that Jackson will be consulted on the subject — If he is willing to be our candidate, so be it — if not, we part with him on fair terms, & probably take up with Macon. . . .

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

WASHINGTON April 20th 1824.

DEAR FATHER,

. . . . . .

Perhaps I gave you too unfavourable an account of Mr. Crawford state of health. I am told by those who converse with him that his mind seems unimpaired & active, & that his bodily health is improving — the state of his eyes however must be very bad — for he certainly neither knew me, nor any other person, who spoke to him, till our names were mentioned — The Hall is however rather dark, & he set in a part of it, which did not give him the benefit of much light — Neither he nor Gallatin[91] has returned any answer to the caucus nomination. Should he at any time see fit to decline, the state of his health would be a sufficient reason. But of this there is no probability while New York pursues the unsteady & indicisive course which has so long disgraced her councils — The popular movement there seems at present to be in favour of Jackson — Clinton's friends are all in his favour — & there is no telling what effect this may have — It is not improbable that it may compel all those who are against him in that state to unite for Crawford — The legislature has betrayed

[91] Albert Gallatin was the caucus nominee for vice-president. See Plumer's letter of May 3, below.

equal folly & baseness, in an act, which everybody condemns here, the removal of Clinton from the office of Canal Commissioner, which he has held, without fee or reward & with eminent advantage to the state, for the last fourteen years — It will produce a strong reaction in his favour — perhaps make him Governor — & in the same proportion help Jackson.[92] . . .

ISAAC HILL[93] TO WILLIAM PLUMER JR.

DEAR SIR: CONCORD, N. H. April 22, 1824.

Your several letters on the subject of the Presidency have been received; and I have given them, particularly those relative to a Congressional Caucus, all that calm consideration which the subject merits. My feelings and my exertions have been too long engaged in the republican cause (which I have ever considered the true cause of the country) to be made the willing instrument to promote the views of any one man to the sacrifice of principle. Hence although a majority of the people of New England should say that they prefer Mr. Adams (as I do not doubt they do) I cannot consent to support his election in opposition to the person whom I consider the regular republican can-

[92] *Cf.* Martin Van Buren, *Autobiography*, 142-144; Hammond, *History of Political Parties in New York*, II, 159-175.

[93] Isaac Hill, to whom reference has already been made (see footnotes 43 and 87, above), besides editing the *New Hampshire Patriot* for twenty years, held a number of political posts. Defeated for the United States senate in 1828, he was appointed second comptroller of the United States, 1829-1830. He was elected to the senate as a democrat and after serving from December 5, 1831 to May 28, 1836, he resigned to become governor of New Hampshire, 1836-1839. He was United States sub-treasurer at Boston from 1840 to 1841. Returning to the journalistic field, he was editor and publisher of Hill's *New Hampshire Patriot* from 1840 to 1847. He died at Washington in 1851.

didate. You may perhaps smile at the naming of a "regular candidate", and reiterate that Mr. Crawford was nominated by a "partial caucus". But you must admit that this was not the fault of Mr. Crawford's friends. Suppose a convention called in our county of Rockingham to nominate a candidate for Councillor, and that two thirds or any number of towns fail to send their delegates. Could it be urged that the nomination was not "regular", because those towns did not think proper to do their duty? The true reason why the friends of other candidates did not attend the Congressional Caucus I conceive to be — that those friends, by previous caucusing (call it *consultation* if you please) found their candidate had not so many supporters as would give him a probable chance to obtain the vote in caucus; and that they had rather "keep up the division", prevent a choice by the people, and ultimately give the election to the House by states, where the representatives of a small minority might control the result. It would certainly make the New Hampshire Patriot differ from all its doctrines from 1809 through the war up to this time — it would be an outrage on all my former opinions — now to condemn the Congressional Caucus, and to abuse those men who had the independence, amidst the hisses of federalists and the opponents of the old democratic party, to go forward fearlessly and propose a candidate for the Presidency to the people of the United States. Talk not how few were there — say not that so many States refused to participate; but rather let the blame rest on those who were only anxious to conceal the weakness of their candidate by preventing his friends and the friends of other candidates (together with those who never go) from going into caucus.

There seems to be something inexplicable and contradictory in the course pursued by Mr. Adams himself. We see it asserted in the papers, that Mr. A. has declared he would not be a candidate if nominated by a Congressional caucus; has he changed his opinion since he attended and voted for Mr. Madison at a former Congressional Caucus?[94] We see it published in a Virginia paper "on authority" that Mr. Adams had always been opposed to restriction on the unfortunate Missouri question, believing Congress by the Constitution had no power to lay such restriction: why was not this opinion before promulgated, when a knowledge of the fact might have tended to allay much of the prejudice and ill will which existed? You certainly did not so understand Mr. Adams, when you wrote me three years ago, that Mr. A did not approve the course the Patriot had taken on that question and on the subject of the tariff.[95]

It is vain to allege, that because the federalists have not a candidate, there is no necessity for a concentration of the republican voice in the election of President. The conviction will speedily come home to every bosom that the present time is one most auspicious to the federal party — that they can accomplish more by divisions among the republicans than they ever have done in any former time. There was no federal candidate against Madison in 1812; yet it is apparent to all, if the *republican* Mr. Clinton[96] had been elected, the federal party would have triumphed, and probably ruined the country. So now if federalists can prevent a choice — if by corrupt bargaining they can make up an administration where Daniel Webster and H. G.

[94] See J. Q. Adams, *Memoirs*, I, 506-507.

[95] See Adams's letter to Plumer, May 3, below, with appended extract from Adams's diary under date of February 23, 1820.

[96] George Clinton, vice-president, 1805-1812.

Otis shall have more influence than the most distinguished and worthy republicans of New England — you will find the very next election will secure to the federalists all they ever wished, and to the republicans, not only the mortification of defeat, but the oppression and proscription which they have always dreaded.

These are some of my views relative to the Presidential question, given in great haste. You are at liberty to exhibit them to the members of our State, as furnishing my apology to them for the course I have taken, and intend hereafter to take.

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

WASHINGTON April 26, 1824

DEAR FATHER,

. . . . . .

You will have perceived, by the newspapers, that the Clintonians in New York are endeaving to put up a party there in favour of Jackson — But it is not certain that this endeavour will long continue. An agent of Clinton came here, three or four weeks ago, & has just left the city. His first object is said to have been to obtain a pledge from Jackson, that, in case of his success, Clinton should be Secretary of State — but Jackson is reported to have replied that Adams should hold that office, if he would accept it under him, in preference to any other person — The next attempt of this agent was to see if he could persuade the New York members, unfriendly to Crawford, to unite for Jackson; but in this also he failed — He then sought an interview with Mr. Adams — To him he expressed his conviction that the opponents of Crawford in New York must unite for Adams — & then asked Mr.

Adams what his feelings were towards Mr. Clinton — Mr. Adams replied that he had no unfriendly feelings towards him — that he had the highest opinion of his talents, patriotism, & public spirit — & that he felt shame for his country at the disgraceful act of the New York legislature in turning Clinton out of the office of Canal Commissioner — But he did not, as I understood it, give him any assurances as to bringing Clinton into the Administration, if he should be President — I had this account from Mr. Adams himself — He thinks that Clinton's object now is to be governor of New York — that he, of course, wishes the support of Adams' friends in that state — & is willing in exchange to give his support to Adams as President[97] — Whether anything will come of this, time must show — Jackson has placed much reliance on the support of the Clintonians in New York — &, if Adams were out of the way, would no doubt be willing to make him Secretary of State — or perhaps of the Treasury — but then he would expect in advance the vote of New York — & this it is not at all probable he will or can receive — Whether Adams would be Secretary under Jackson I do not know — He once told me that he could not hold it under any man who might succeed Mr. Monroe — but from all I have observed I think he would under Jackson — or at least, I think he means to wait — & not determine till the time comes — Under Crawford, Clay, or Calhoun he could not serve —

[97] *Cf.* J. Q. Adams, *Memoirs*, VI, 292-294, 302, where Adams reports at considerable length the activities and proposals of a certain "Mr. Moore" who was in Washington in the interests of DeWitt Clinton. In December, 1824, Adams admitted to General Jacob Brown the importance of "a good understanding between Mr. Clinton's friends and mine," and added that "the only person to be convinced was Mr. Clinton himself." *Ibid.*, VI, 441-442.

The above account of Jackson's answer to Clinton's agent — does not rest upon as certain information as the other facts. By some it is said that Jackson declined giving any pledge to Clinton, more than the general assurance of good will, friendship, &c. which he has always expressed towards Clinton — . . .

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

WASHINGTON May 3d 1824.

DEAR FATHER,

You express surprise that the Crawford caucus should have nominated Gallatin for Vice President. If they had a new nomination to make, they would now select a different man — It is easy to see what was their design — The three greatest states are New York Virginia & Pennsylvania — & it was justly concluded by Crawford's friends that the union of these three, with the strength which he might otherwise command, would secure his election — Virginia they considered safe, because he is, in fact the Virginia candidate — New York was, if possible, to be secured by elaborate system of intrigue with its legislature — & Pennsylvania, it was confidently anticipated, would be induced to join the coalition for the sake of making Gallatin Vice President — Hence his return from France at the precise moment,[98] & his nomination by the Caucus — But the ap-

[98] Gallatin was appointed minister to France in 1815. His probable nomination as vice-president on the ticket with Crawford is disclosed in a letter from Romulus M. Saunders to Bartlett Yancey, December 17, 1823. *James Sprunt Historical Publications*, Vol. X, No. 2, pp. 39-40. For the circumstances leading to Gallatin's withdrawal from the race, see Albert Gallatin, *Writings* (Henry Adams, ed.), II, 293, 296-299. *Cf. Niles' Register*, XXVII, 113, 147-148.

pearance of Jackson in the field, & the dexterity of Calhoun's friends in uniting their names together, defeated all these designs — & Gallatin now hangs a dead weight on the caucus ticket — I think it may be set down as certain that at least two thirds of the people of the United States have made up their minds against Mr. Crawford's being President. Who they will elect is not altogether so certain — . . .

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS TO WILLIAM PLUMER JR.

WASHINGTON 26 July 1824

DEAR SIR,

. . . . . .

The health of Mr. Crawford is so far restored, that there is now no probability that he will be withdrawn as a Candidate for the Presidency. His convalescence has not been quite so rapid as his particular friends have desired and represented, but it has been for nearly two months steadily advancing. He has removed to a residence two or three miles distant from the City, and daily transacts business at his residence — Excepting the single contingency of a possible relapse, it is probable he will be completely restored before the next meeting of Congress. His political prospects, so far as I can judge remain much as they were from last Valentine's day; with the exception of Mr. Forward of Pennsylvania, who has turned backward to his cause, and now pushes for General Jackson — . . .

I subjoin a copy of the entry in my Dairy of my Conversation with you and Mr. Livermore, relating to the Missouri question on the 23d of February 1820.

23d. A. Livermore and W. Plumer, Junr., members of the House of Representatives from New Hampshire,

called upon me, and, conversing on the Missouri slave question, which at this time agitates Congress and the nation, asked my opinion of the propriety of agreeing to a compromise. The division in Congress and the nation is nearly equal on both sides. The argument on the free side is, the moral and political duty of preventing the extension of slavery in the immense country from the Mississippi River to the South Sea. The argument on the slave side is, that Congress have no power by the Constitution to prohibit slavery in any States, and, the zealots say, not in any Territory. The proposed compromise is to admit Missouri, and hereafter Arkansas, as States, without any restriction upon them regarding slavery, but to prohibit the future introduction of slaves in all Territories of the United States north of 36° 30′ latitude. I told these gentlemen that my opinion was, the question could be settled no otherwise than by a compromise. The regulation, exclusion, or abolition of slavery in the system of our Union is among the powers reserved to the people of the several States by their separate Governments, though I have no doubt that Congress have Constitutional powers to prohibit any internal traffic in slaves between one State and another. In the States where slavery does not exist, neither Congress, nor the State Legislature, nor the people have any rightful power to establish it. For the admission into the Union of a State where no slavery exists, Congress may prescribe as a condition that slavery shall never be established in it, as they have done to the States of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois; but where it exists, and where there are already slaves in great numbers, as in Missouri and Arkansas, the power of extirpating it is not given to Congress by the Constitution. To proscribe slavery, there-

fore, in Missouri or Arkansas, I believe to be impracticable. But if a provision can be obtained excluding the introduction of slaves into future Territories, it will be a great and important point secured. I apprehend, however, that Livermore and Plumer did not concur with me in my opinion.[99]

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

WASHINGTON December 7th 1824.

DEAR FATHER,

. . . . . .

I had a conversation today with Mr. Webster — He came to my seat, & began by asking me what I intended to do with myself after the close of the present session. . . . He said that I must remain in public life[100] — . . . that we must act with firmness, yet with moderation in the presidential election, supporting Mr. Adams, yet not quarreling with Gen. Jackson — that if Adams succeeded, all was well — if Jackson, the north, by not quarreling with him, would come in for her share in the administration. He said that he had sought nobody's alliance, & nobody had sought his — but that he might perhaps be thought of among others in forming the new list of appointments under the next president — I asked him if he expected one of the Departments — He said, no, I have no wish or expectation of coming to Washington in any capacity, except as a member of this House — The mission to London then is your object, said I to him — Why, said he, perhaps it

[99] *Cf.* J. Q. Adams, *Memoirs*, IV, 529-530.

[100] On June 5, 1824, Webster had written to Ezekiel Webster that he had a high regard for Plumer and expressed the hope that Plumer could be kept in congress. See *Letters*, 106-107.

would be idle in me to shoot my arrow so high — but — at this moment a motion was made for the House to adjourn. Webster added that he would talk with me again on the subject — but that what he wanted me to understand, in short, & at once, was, that we two should so act together as mutually to assist each other, as far as might be proper. . . .

Some things are plain, First, he wishes to go Minister to London — Secondly, for this purpose, he means to take no very decided course in relation to the Presidency, so that, whoever succeeds, he may stand well with the next administration[101] — . . .

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

Washington December 9th 1824.

Dear father,

I called upon Mr. Adams yesterday, or the day before, & had some conversation with him on the question of the Presidency[102] — He said that the present state of the votes was one calculated to show the North what was the southern & western policy — At the north, we had our candidate for the Presidency — but we did not even think of a Vice President from among ourselves — but voted for a Southern or a Western man — At the South, on the contrary, the friends of Crawford supported Macon; the friends of Jackson, Calhoun — all southern men, all slave holders — the north was to having nothing — by this

[101] *Cf.* J. Q. Adams, *Memoirs*, VI, 442: "Plumer mentioned to me a late conversation that he had with Webster, who is panting for the mission to London, and sounding Plumer's hopes and purposes." Webster regarded Adams's chance of success the best. *Letters*, 108.

[102] There is no report of this conversation in Adams's *Memoirs*.

double conspiracy, of the south & the west, the north was proscribed — it was not the man, but the country which they disliked — This state of things had united the north; & that unison must ultimately, if not now, insure us success — As to the state of things in Congress, he looked upon New England as fixed — there was no state which could desert him — New York, he thought, might he relied upon as also secured.[103] Now with this strength we are stronger than any other party — Jackson received fewer votes from the people in Maryland than Adams did in New Jersey, Jackson succeeded only by the help of Clay's & Crawford's friends — & In North Carolina, by the aid of Adams friends — Adams succeeded, no where, but upon his own strength — his party is therefore homogeneous, solid, divided by no conflicting interests — Take from Jackson the votes which the friends of other candidates gave him & he falls below Adams — Our policy then, said Mr. Adams, is to stand still — to make no advances to any party — if they can make a President among themselves, let them do it — we are one — they are divided — & if we stand firm, our union & our numbers must finally prevail over their divided forces — He spoke of Crawford, as being entirely out of the case — The Caucus had destroyed him — As little favour as he had found with Congress, he had found still less with the people — & the former could not now take him up, after the latter had so decidedly discarded him — He spoke of Calhoun as having acted a very selfish part — & seemed to think that he would never get higher than the Vice Presidency — He seemed particularly

[103] Adams, however, was considerably worried over the possibility of Clinton's friends supporting another candidate. *Memoirs*, VI, 441-442, 443-444.

anxious that his friends should make no advances to those of other candidates — Stand still, & see what they will do — We cannot go to Crawford — for even if we did, we could not make him President — & to join Jackson is unnecessary — he is already but too strong — On the whole, Mr. Adams seemed neither confident of success, nor disposed to despond — In my opinion, the election rests greatly with Ohio — If she refuses to support Jackson, he is no longer able to succeed without the support of states which, in that event, he cannot get — As far as I can learn, the Ohio members are still undecided — If Clay comes into the House, which is uncertain, they are for him — & next to him, if left to themselves, for Adams — . . .

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

DEAR FATHER, WASHINGTON December 15th 1824

. . . . . .

I am glad to find that Mr. Adams had all the votes in New Hampshire, as this makes his strength entire in New England — But little that can be relied upon is yet said among the Members respecting the Presidency — If the real wishes of the members were known, I have no doubt that Jackson would be found in a lean minority — but many will vote for him because their constituents have done so — Mr. Forward of Pennsylvania told me yesterday that a majority of his colleagues would be glad to vote for Adams, but they could not do it — By some it is said that Crawford's friends have not yet given up all hopes of his success — but I cannot think they have themselves any expectations of carrying him — What they will finally do is unknown — . . .

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

Washington December 16th 1824.

Dear father,

The news from Louisiana makes it now certain that Crawford, & not Clay, will came in to the House; as the third candidate, with Jackson & Adams[104] — In conversation with Gen. McArthur[105] of Ohio, he told me, that the delegation of that state were about equally divided between Adams & Jackson — & he could not tell how they would finally go — They balance between the wish to have a Western President now, in the person of Jackson, whom they do not much like; & the certainty of having Clay, by the aid of the northern states, at some future period — It is in fact very much in Clay's power to make the President — If he says Jackson, the nine Western states are united at once for him — If he says Adams, two or three Western states fall off — & Jackson must fail; unless indeed, (which seems not at all probable,) all Crawford's friends join him — . . .

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

Washington December 24, 1824

Dear father,

I called again today upon Mr. Adams[106] — He seemed to be in much better spirits than when I saw him before, or rather to entertain more expectation of success than he

104 *Cf.* Henry Clay, *Works*, IV, 108: "The result in Louisiana did not surprise or affect me. There was much misfortune attending it nevertheless." See also J. Q. Adams, *Memoirs*, VI, 446.

105 Representative Duncan McArthur.

106 Adams mentioned Plumer's visit but did not record the conversation. *Memoirs*, VI, 453.

appeared then to indulge. He said, among other things, that he had received overtures, more or less distinct, both from the friends of Mr. Crawford & Mr. Clay — From the Virginia delegation he had assurances that, after voting two or three times for Mr. Crawford, they would vote for him rather than Jackson[107] — The friends of Mr. Clay held out the idea that they should perhaps vote for him in the first instance; & thus secure his election at the first ballot, leaving the friends of Jackson & of Crawford in the minority — They made their thirteen states out thus — New England six, New York seven, Ohio eight, Indiana nine, Illinois ten, Kentucky eleven, Missouri twelve, & Louisiana thirteen — In this event Clay's friends would have the merit of making Adams President; & have it all to themselves, without participation with any other party — The result would, in their opinion, be to put down Jackson & Crawford, & put Clay up for the next President — Nothing very precise or definite had been yet promised by these people — but the probability of their taking this course had been mentioned to him, as I understood Mr. Adams, by one or more of Clay's confidential friends[108] — It is an essential part of this plan, as conceived by Clay, to throw Virginia & the South into the minority, & consequently into an opposition to the new administration — Crawford's friends, on the contrary, particularly Virginia, wish to

[107] Senator James Barbour had so assured Adams. *Ibid.*, VI, 450.

[108] Representative Robert P. Letcher was the most active of Clay's friends in approaching Adams. Letcher and Adams held several conversations along the line indicated by Adams to Plumer. See *ibid.*, VI, 446-447, 452-453. Clay himself had expressed the opinion as early as February 23, 1824, that in case he were eliminated from the race, Adams would get the vote of the northwestern states and would have the best chance of winning New York, New Jersey and Maryland, "to say nothing of Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana." *Works*, IV, 87.

come in, & have it said that they made the President, but not on the first ballot, nor till they have shown, by the state of the votes, that Crawford is clearly out of the case — On the whole, I think things favourable to Mr. Adams' ultimate success — The moderate men are against Jackson — They know that he is incompetent; & they feel that he would be unsafe — Mr. Jefferson & Mr. Madison have both declared recently against General Jackson — Madison without saying whom he would prefer — Jefferson says that, though he had, on the whole, preferred Crawford, he thinks Mr. Adams a very safe man; & should have no objection to see the government in his hands — Against Jackson, he spoke in a very pointed manner — This I had from Mr. Webster, who has just returned from his visit to the two Presidents[109]—

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

Washington December 25th 1824.

Dear father,

. . . . . .

I had lately a long conversation with Mr. M'Lane[110] of Delaware on the election of President — He holds the vote of a state in his hands — & has always been known as the friend of Mr. Crawford — In this conversation, he seemed to go upon the supposition that Mr. Crawford was now out of the case — He did not say so directly, but his remarks

[109] For Jefferson's opposition to Jackson, see Daniel Webster, *Private Correspondence*, I, 371. See also Bassett, *Life of Andrew Jackson*, I, 329. Madison's attitude toward Jackson is discussed in Gaillard Hunt, *Life of James Madison*, 364-365.

[110] Representative Louis McLane, the only member of the house from his state.

seemed to imply it — He expressed himself with great force against Jackson & Calhoun — & said that he could not, at any rate, vote for Jackson — It follows, almost of course, that he will ultimately be for Adams — He said that Adams was not popular in Delaware, & that Crawford was — & that he could not do anything which would be more popular at home than to vote for Crawford to the end, even though every other state deserted him — but as to popularity, he said, he did not regard that — . . . On the whole I think Delaware may be set down to Adams in the last resort — It is possible that M'Lane may feel himself bound to do as the other Crawfordites think most expedient, whatever that course may be — but left to himself he inclines certainly to Adams —

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

WASHINGTON January 4th 1825

DEAR FATHER,

. . . . . .

New facts & views, favourable to the final success of Mr. Adams, are every day coming to light. The States of Ohio, Kentucky, & Missouri are all prepared to go as they think will be most advantageous to Mr. Clay — or, in other words, as he shall direct. It happens too that, though Clay has but two friends among the members from Maryland, those two have the vote of the state in their hands — Three of their members are for Jackson, three for Adams, two for Clay, & one for Crawford — The Clay men can of course turn the scale; & one of them (Warfield)[111] told me yesterday that they should go with Clay's friends in the west,

[111] Henry R. Warfield.

whether they went for Adams or for Jackson — Clay then may be considered as having four states at his command — How then will Mr. Clay decide? Every consideration of policy, as well as of justice, points to a union with Adams, that he & his friends see this, is evident even to the most superficial observers here — A thousand little incidents show that they will not mistake their true interest in this occasion — But I have better proof than this of the course they mean to pursue — I called upon Mr. Adams yesterday[112] — & had considerable conversation with him on the subject — Among other facts which speak loudly on this subject, he told me that, at the public dinner given to LaFayette, on the first of January, he set next to Mr. Clay, who was remarkably civil, & attentive to him, & in the course of the dinner said to him, in a whisper, that he wished to see him in private, & have a free & confidential conversation with him[113] — Mr. Adams replied that he should be happy to see him whenever he should find it convenient to call upon him — Clay replied that he would do so in a few days — They have not yet met — It is not possible to mistake Clay's object in this interview — He sees that his interest leads him to join Adams — But he knows his own importance, & does not mean to throw himself blindly into any man's power till he knows what will be his reception — He means therefore to see Mr. Adams; to learn what he is to expect from him, in the event of his success; & then to determine on the course he shall finally pursue — He has succeeded in bringing a majority of the members from at least four states to that equipoise of

[112] Adams refers to a conversation with Plumer on January 4. *Memoirs*, VI, 459-460.

[113] *Cf. ibid.*, VI, 457.

opinion, in which his own weight will be sufficient to turn them either way — If they vote for Adams, the vote will stand thus — New England six, New York, seven, Ohio eight, Kentucky nine, Missouri ten, Maryland eleven — Two more states only are wanting — But in the end, I think we may calculate, with considerable confidence, upon Virginia, Delaware, Illinois, & Louisiana — which is two more than is necessary for a choice. On the contrary if Clay goes off, with his four states, we should still be strong enough with the aid of New Jersey & North Carolina — the former state is still undecided, leaning, I think, to Mr. Adams — & the latter, being principally Crawfordites, are much more likely to go with Virginia, in support of Adams, than to vote for Jackson, between whom & Crawford's friends there is much hostility — On the whole things look well for the final result; though it is mortifying to see, how much personal interest prevails over principle — the ambition of a few individuals over a regard for the public good — in this whole affair — A very striking instance of this, may be mentioned in the course pursued by De Wit Clinton, in relation to this election — Last summer, he sought, & received the aid of Mr. Adams' friends in New York, to make him governor — & without that aid, he would not have succeeded — Now, he is writing letters to his friends here, advising them to support Jackson[114] — He is supposed to reason thus with himself — "If Adams succeeds, I shall never be President — because the North cannot give two Presidents in succession — If Jackson succeeds, I shall be Secretary of State, & may be President" — I ought however to mention that others say he has

[114] *Cf. ibid.*, VI, 470, where Adams makes a similar accusation against Clinton.

written in favour of Adams — that he has written in favour of Jackson is certain — if for Adams also, he is playing a double game — Perhaps in this view of the conduct of our leading men, I am too uncharitable, in tracing their conduct to such selfish motives — but I have endeavoured to state facts as I find them — & with respect to motives, I leave you to judge of them — It is fair however to state with respect to Clay's friends, that they profess to attach less importance to men than to measures — Give us, they say, a man who is for internal improvement; & we do not care whether he is from the east or the west — . . .

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

WASHINGTON January 7th 1825

DEAR FATHER,

. . . . . .

It begins now to be believed among the best informed of Mr. Adams' friends, with whom I have conversed, though nothing certain is known on the subject, that Mr. Clay will vote with us, on the Presidential election. The choice is evidently confined to Adams & Jackson; & though Mr. Clay probably does not much like either of them, yet looking to the public character & qualifications of the two candidates, he cannot but see that the advantage, in these respects, is wholly on the side of Adams. Even if he consults his private feelings alone, he can hardly fail to give Mr. Adams the preference. Much has been said about their controversy respecting the Ghent negotiation — but this is nothing, compared with the direct personal hostility between Clay & Jackson, which grew out of the Seminole debate. At the late public dinner, Clay & Adams were placed next

to each other at the table; & there was observed, in their deportment towards each other, nothing which indicated the existence of that ill will, or resentment, which have sometimes be[en] imputed to them. On the contrary, the urbanity of Mr. Clay, & the frankness of Mr. Adams, seemed to evince the absence of all hostile or unfriendly feelings. . . . For my own part, I am more & more of the opinion that Clay will finally vote for Adams.[115] But Mr. Clay will not be alone in this vote. His friends in Congress have great confidence in the soundness of his judgment — many of them have always been friendly to Adams as their second choice — & none of them would willingly differ from him on this interesting subject — so that, if I am correct in my conjecture as to Mr. Clay's vote, the question may be considered as settled. For the friends of Clay, joined to those of Adams, would certainly secure his election; if not at the first ballot, at least, when it was ascertained that Crawford stood no chance of being chosen. . . .

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

Washington January 11th 1825

Dear father,

. . . . . .

I have already informed you of Mr. Clay's intended interview with Mr. Adams — I called on the latter, today, & asked him if he had seen Clay — He said that he received

[115] On January 8, 1825, the day after the date of Plumer's letter, Clay wrote to his friend Francis P. Blair that he intended to support Adams. *Works*, IV, 109-110. Senator Benton claimed that Clay had informed him before December 15, 1824, of his decision to vote for Adams. *Thirty Years' View*, I, 48. Benton stated that he had made this fact known "to the public in a letter which was copied into many newspapers, and is

a note from him Saturday morning (the 8th) informing him that, if agreeable, he would call on him that evening[116] — He accordingly came, & spent the whole evening, three hours, in a very free & satisfactory conversation, in which they went over all their past differences, the scenes in which they had acted together, their present views of policy, & their expectations for the future — On the subject of the Presidency, Clay said that, after a full consideration of all the circumstances, he had determined to support Mr. Adams in preference to either of the other candidates — with respect to Mr. Crawford, he had seen him repeatedly, this session, & was satisfied, from his own personal observation, that the state of his health was such as to disqualify him for the office of President — It was not therefore necessary in relation to him to go at all into any other view of the subject — This was enough to exclude him — That with respect to General Jackson — when Mr. Adams had got this far, in relating the conversation with Mr. Clay, we were unfortunately interrupted by some person's coming in — Mr. Adams had time only to add, that I was the only person to whom he had mentioned this subject — & that he wished it might, for the present, be considered as strictly confidential, as Clay wished to take his own time to come out, & would not probably do so for some weeks yet — I do not consider myself as violating this injunction by writing to you. . . .

preserved in *Niles' Register*." A careful examination of *Niles' Register* during the period under discussion, as well as of the files of several leading contemporary newspapers, failed to reveal any such letter. Unless more definite proof of the publication of this letter can be found, one must conclude that Benton was in error in this statement.

[116] According to Adams, his meeting with Clay took place Sunday evening, January 9. *Memoirs*, VI, 464-465. Another conference between Adams and Clay was held January 29. *Ibid.*, VI, 483.

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

WASHINGTON January 13th 1825

DEAR FATHER,

. . . . . .

There is no end to the changes which the Presidential question undergoes — The Kentuckians have, today, received information that a resolution has passed their House of Representatives instructing them to vote for Jackson — There is no question that this was done on the suggestion of Jackson's friends here — &, as the Western Legislatures are nearly all in session, it is even feared that in Ohio, Illinois, & Missouri the same thing will be attempted, & perhaps with success! If it is, it will be almost too much to expect their members here should resist so strong an impulse — such is the popular infatuation in favour of Jackson — The Kentuckians are a good deal shaken by this event — but if the other states, in which Clay has influence, stand firm, they may perhaps rally again — &, if not, we are still strong enough if we loose no more than Kentucky[117] — . . .

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

WASHINGTON January 20th 1825

DEAR FATHER,

. . . . . .

Mr. Adams gave me some further account of his conversation with Clay — He said that Mr. Clay spoke of General Jackson as possessing no merit whatever, except that of a military character — that he was ignorant of the laws &

[117] See *ibid.*, VI, 467-468, 469. A copy of the Kentucky resolution was printed in *Niles' Register*, XXVII, 321-322.

institutions of the country, & had never shown any capacity as a statesman — that for such a man to become President, upon the sole ground of a little military success, would, in his opinion, be the greatest misfortune that could befal the country[118] — that he (Clay,) had therefore no hesitation in deciding among the candidates now before the House — but that time would be required to overcome the prejudices of many of his friends, in favour of Jackson, as a Western man, & against Adams as an eastern man & heretofore the object of jealousy & suspicion in the western states — but that in due time he should come out — & doubted not but his friends would go with him, — I did not think it decorous to enquire more particularly — nor did Mr. Adams seem disposed to say anything further of what passed between them — . . .

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

DEAR FATHER, WASHINGTON January 24th 1825

. . . . . .

It begins now to be considered pretty certain that Adams will be President — As a last resort, the Jacksonites, despairing of Clay, are endeavouring to secure the friends of Crawford — Jackson, when he came here last winter, & made up with all his other enemies — Clay, Benton, Cocke,

[118] This characterization of Jackson is practically identical with the one Clay made in his letter to Francis P. Blair. See footnote 115, above. On this point, see the letter of Samuel Swartout to Jackson and Jackson's reply, in American Antiquarian Society, *Proceedings*, N. S., XXXI, 80-87. The entire series of letters there published has a direct bearing upon the campaign of 1824-1825. Fear of Jackson's "very sincere but very erroneous and most dangerous opinions on the subject of military and Executive power" was expressed by Gallatin in a letter to Walter Lowrie, May 22, 1824. Albert Gallatin, *Writings*, II, 291.

Scott,[119] &c — keep aloof from Crawford — & seemed to wish for no compromise or understanding with him — now, however, when it is certain he must fail of success, if he does not secure the friends of Crawford, he has changed his course — It is said that he has been to see Mr. Crawford in person, & made very humble submissions, & profered him any terms which he might ask as the price of his cooperation & support — I doubt however whether this is strictly true — but there is no doubt that he has made overtures to Mr. Crawford — that he sent, some days since, one of his particular & confidential friends to Mr. Crawford to inform him that he was willing to bury the hatchet; & to be, for the future upon good terms with him — that he wished to consider Mr. Crawford & Mr. Crawford's friends as his friends; & that, in the event of his success, they should have no reason to complain of him — In this project he cannot succeed — the states which are certain to vote for Jackson are Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Indiana, Mississippi, & Alabama, — those for Crawford, Delaware, Virginia, North Carolina, & Georgia — ten in all — but it is equally certain that Delaware & Virginia will never vote for Jackson — It is hardly possible that North Carolina should vote for him — & almost certain that Georgia will continue to the end to vote for Mr. Crawford — But, if he had all the Crawford States, he then wants three more — & it is barely possible that he might get New Jersey & North Carolina — but — this is not at all probable — & it is still more difficult to imagine where he would get another vote, which would be necessary to chose him — It seems therefore pretty well settled that he cannot be chosen — It is indeed impossible to foretell

[119] See footnote 66, above.

what changes may take place within the next sixteen days — but I do not see any that can materially alter the present aspect of affairs —

Since writing the above, Mr. Fuller informs me that Mr. Crawford told him, today, that Gen. Jackson had never called upon him, either this session or the last — the other part of the story as to his advances to Crawford, through a friend, is undoubtedly true[120] —

On reaching the House today, I found an unusual bustle in every quarter — a buzzing in the hive like the swarming of bees — hundts of politicians on all the sophas & in every recess, & some strong & universal sensation pervading every part of the House. I soon learned the cause of all this stirr — The Ohio & Kentucky members, after ascertaining their minds in private, met publicly this morning, in one of the Committee rooms; & inviting in some of the leading friends of Crawford & Jackson, informed them that

[120] James Buchanan, in a letter of January 2, 1825, to Thomas Elder, discussed freely the rumors which were prevalent in Washington. He wrote that Crawford's friends believed they held the balance of power between Adams and Jackson and it was rumored that they were attempting a coalition with the friends of Adams. Buchanan was of the opinion that if Clay desired, he could give the votes of Ohio and Louisiana to Adams. He thought that Clay would "act properly" but might "be the better for being watched."

Buchanan declared that Jackson was "a man whose integrity is such that no person would dare to talk to him about conciliating the friends of the other candidates by holding out to them any offers of Office," a remark both interesting and important in the light of later charges made by Jackson himself against Buchanan. After listing the states which he regarded as certain to vote for the respective candidates, Buchanan said he considered the chances in favor of Jackson as "two to one". James Buchanan, *Works* (John Bassett Moore, ed.), I, 119-121. For the later charges above referred to, see G. T. Curtis, *Life of James Buchanan*, I, 38-56, 506-514; also Jackson's letter to Samuel Swartout, May 16, 1825, American Antiquarian Society, *Proceedings*, N. S., XXXI, 87-88; Bassett, *Life of Andrew Jackson*, I, 356-359.

they had determined to vote for Adams[121] — you can imagine the effect of such a declaration easier than I can describe it — To the greater part of the members of our House, it was equally sudden & unexpected — In me, it created no surprise — because I have long known the course things were taking, & the result to which they must finally come.

What course the friends of Mr. Crawford will take remains to be seen — the attempt of Jackson to secure their votes for himself must, it appears to me, fail — I talked with McLane of Delaware, today, on the subject — & he said they might as well think of turning the Capitol upside down as of persuading him to vote for Jackson[122] — I believe that the Virginians are equally set against Jackson — Perhaps they will continue to the end voting for Mr. Crawford, if indeed we do not elect Mr. Adams at the first ballot, which now seems very probable. . . .

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

WASHINGTON February 6 1825

DEAR FATHER,

. . . . . .

Not much has occured in relation to the Presidency, since I wrote you last, except what you will find in the Newspapers — Clay's card is generally condemned, except by a few of his friends, who say it was necessary — What the committee of investigation, raised on this subject, will do is uncertain — If they bring before them everybody who has, at any time, talked about the Presidential election, &

[121] *Cf.* J. Q. Adams, *Memoirs*, VI, 478.

[122] Plumer reported this conversation to Adams. *Ibid.*

report all the idle, or serious, talk which has passed, among us, for the last two months, on this subject, they will do little credit to Congress or to themselves — That they will acquit Clay there is no doubt — That they will condemn Kremer is very probable — He is however, of such a character, and the friends of Jackson, exasperated by disappointment, are so violent, that it will be prudent, at least, to let him off as easy as they can — &, by no means, to give him a chance to cry out that he is a persecuted man[123] —

It seems now to be pretty generally agreed that Adams will be chosen President — many think at the first ballot — I think it doubtful whether he will, at the first trial, have more than eleven states — perhaps only ten — but in the end Maryland & Louisiana will vote for him — & if necessary, I think Virginia, North Carolina, & Delaware would do the same — but we shall probably be strong enough without the aid of Mr. Crawford's friends — . . .

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

Washington February 13th 1825

Dear father,

. . . . . .

You will learn, long before this reaches you, that we succeeded in choosing Mr. Adams, on the 9th instant, President, at the first ballot — This fortunate result, though probable, was never certain, till the moment when it took place — The majority in New York was but one, out of thirty four votes — & even the New York members did not

[123] For the charges made by Kremer against Clay and the latter's demand for an official investigation, see *Congressional Debates*, 18 Cong., 2 Sess., 440-444, 463-486, 522-525. The "cards" were published in *Niles' Register*, XXVII, 353.

know, with certainty, which way it would be, till their votes were counted.[124] In Maryland the majority was but one, — & that one (Mitchell)[125] would have voted for Jackson, if he had not been afraid of his constituents, who were for Adams — In Louisiana, it depended upon the vote of Mr. Gurley[126] — He was friendly to Adams — but timid, & indecisive — Thus in three states, we depended upon one vote in each — But though we were thus uncertain as to the first vote, there is no doubt that, if we had made no choice then, we should have had, at subsequent trials, the votes of New Jersey & Indiana — & if the choice could have been confined to Adams & Jackson, we should have had the votes of Delaware, Virginia, & Georgia, in preference to Jackson —

Every thing in this election was conducted with perfect

[124] The doubtful member of the New York delegation was Stephen Van Rensselaer, who confided to Webster his difficulties in deciding between Adams and Jackson. The latter advised Van Rensselaer to see Adams, which he did. Adams's assurances of his lack of animosity against the federalists evidently satisfied Van Rensselaer, who voted for Adams. On this episode, see J. Q. Adams, *Memoirs*, VI, 493-494; Martin Van Buren, *Autobiography*, 149-152; Margaret B. Smith, *Forty Years of Washington Society*, 184-186, 190-193.

[125] George E. Mitchell. According to other contemporary accounts it would seem that Henry R. Warfield held the deciding vote in the Maryland delegation. He wrote to Webster on the subject, who, after telling of his own determination to vote for Adams, urged Warfield to see Adams. As in the case of Van Rensselaer, Adams assured Warfield that the federalists would receive fair treatment at his hands, and Warfield cast his vote for Adams. See Daniel Webster, *Private Correspondence*, I, 377-380; J. Q. Adams, *Memoirs*, VI, 492-493, 497-498, 499-500.

[126] Henry H. Gurley. Gurley was born in Connecticut and was a graduate of Williams College. He, like a number of other young New Englanders, went to Louisiana to practice law. The movement of these New Englanders southward into Louisiana in the early years of the nineteenth century is an interesting one. See, for example, "Letters from Louisiana" (Everett S. Brown, ed.), in *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XI, 570-579.

propriety & decorum on the part of the House — There was no noise or confusion — no undue exultation in Mr. Adams' friends, & no resentment expressed by those of the other candidates[127] — . . .

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

Washington February 16th 1825

Dear father,

Since the election of a President has been made, the principal object of enquiry & of solicitude has been the selection of a new Cabinet — Going upon the principle of keeping those in office whom he found there, Mr. Adams wrote letters to Mr. Crawford & Mr. Southard requesting them to remain in their present offices under him — Mr. Crawford replied, (with thanks for the invitation,) that he had, long since determined, at all events, to resign his present office, at the close of Mr. Monroe's administration so that a new Secretary of the Treasury is to be appointed — It was certainly wise, & magnaminous in Mr. Adams to offer Mr. Crawford this station — It was perhaps equally wise in him to decline it — The state of his health, though much improved, seemed hardly to admit of his going on with the duties of so laborious an office — Mr. Southard accepted

[127] For Adams's pious comments on the action of the house of representatives, see *Memoirs*, VI, 501-502. A detailed account of the rules to be followed by the house of representatives in the election of a President and a description of the election itself will be found in *Congressional Debates*, 18 Cong., 2 Sess., 361-363, 420-434, 444-461, 490-516, 522, 525-527. At the conclusion of this account of the election a note was appended which reports that when the vote was announced, clapping and hissing occurred in the galleries, and the house suspended its proceedings until the galleries had been cleared. *Cf.* Ben. Perley Poore, *Reminiscences*, I, 23-26.

the invitation given him — so that there will be no new Secretary of the Navy to be appointed — Many of Mr. Adams' friends are dissatisfied at this appointment — They think that Mr. Southard, besides being no better qualified for the office than a hundred that might be named, has been playing a double part — that while he professed friendship to Adams, he was secretly aiding Jackson, & that he is, in fact, a mere tool of Calhoun's — I do not however think there is much to fear from him — It is undoubtedly true that abler men might have been found — but no good reason could be given for turning him out — the same is true of Mr. Wirt, to whom, the same invitation has been extended — He is a good lawyer — but not equal to several who might be selected — & what is very material in these critical times, he brings to the new administration no accession of political power or influence in the country — But being already in the office of attorney general he could not well be turned out — By some it is said, he will decline the offer, & remove to Baltimore — Where the death of Pinkney, Winder, & Harper,[128] has opened a fine field for professional emolument and renown —

The office of Secretary of State was, at the same time, offered to Mr. Clay[129] — this was anticipated, by everybody, as a matter of course — The Western States, nine in number, with a population of two or three millions, have never had a President, a Secretary of State, or any other commanding Station in the Government[130] — Upon every prin-

[128] William Pinkney died February 25, 1822; William Henry Winder, May 24, 1824; and Robert Goodloe Harper, January 15, 1825.

[129] Adams informed President Monroe on February 11 that he would offer the department of state to Clay. He made his offer to Clay on February 12. *Memoirs*, VI, 508-509.

[130] John Breckinridge of Kentucky was attorney general under Jefferson from August 7, 1805 to December 14, 1806. George W. Campbell

ciple, they were entitled to notice — When to this we add, that five of these states voted for Mr. Adams,[131] & thereby pledged themselves to his support, & that all this was done by the friends of Mr. Clay, it is hardly necessary to suppose any corrupt bargain, or intrigue between Clay & Adams, to account for the promotion of a man, who had already been twice offered a seat in the cabinet by former Presidents[132] — Yet the peculiar state of things, at the present moment, makes it a question of great delicacy to determine what he ought to do in this emergency — To accept, will confirm, in the minds of his enemies, all those vulgar prejudices which have been so industriously circulated against him — & give them an opportunity to represent both Adams & Clay as unprincipled intriguers, who have sacrificed old resentments to present interests, & advanced their own views of personal egrandizement at the expense of the public good — Should he, on the other hand, decline, he will get no credit for this act — His conduct will be imputed to fear rather than to principle — & it will be said that he had not courage to accept the reward of his own perfidy[133] — His friends are somewhat divided in opin-

of Tennessee was secretary of the treasury in 1814 under Madison. Return J. Meigs, Jr., of Ohio served as postmaster-general under Madison and Monroe, from March 17, 1814 to June 30, 1823, when he was succeeded by another Ohioan, John McLean.

131 Plumer is counting Louisiana as a western state, with Kentucky, Ohio, Missouri and Illinois as the other four. The six New England states and New York and Maryland voted for Adams to make the necessary majority of thirteen.

132 For previous offers of official positions to Clay, see Henry Clay, *Works*, IV, 114; James Madison, *Letters and other Writings* (1865, ed.), IV, 556; Albert Gallatin, *Writings*, II, 36.

133 In a letter to Francis Brooke, February 18, two days after Plumer's letter, Clay made a similar statement of his position but added that he had decided to accept Adams's offer. *Works*, IV, 114-116.

opinion; but the greater part advice him to accept the offer — & I have very little doubt he will do so — The interests of Clay & Adams are, at any rate, identified—If Adams is run down, Clay falls with him — If Clay loses his ground in the West, Adams loses also all foothold in that country— What is good for one, is, therefore, good for both — On the whole, there are great difficulties on every side — & it will require no ordinary prudence to surmount them. The friends of Jackson, or rather of Calhoun, announce already their intention to commence a regular & steady opposition to the administration; & are determined to be satisfied with nothing which can be done[134] — If however a prudent course is taken, I do not think much is to be feared from a factious opposition, founded in such views, & unsupported by any real & substantial grounds of complaint in the acts of the government itself — . . .

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

Washington February 21st 1825

Dear father,

. . . . . .

I have had several conversations with Mr. Adams respecting the formation of his cabinet — He informed me, this morning,[135] that Mr. Clay, yesterday, accepted his invitation to become Secretary of State — so that, that question is now settled — The next is, who shall be Secretary of the Treasury? — I am inclined to think that it will

[134] *Cf.* J. Q. Adams, *Memoirs*, VI, 506-507.

[135] There is no entry in Adams's *Memoirs* between February 16 and February 23.

be Mr. Rush[136] — Mr. Adams thinks he has more talents than he has had credit for, & says that, as Minister to England, he has shown no want of ability, knowledge, or sagacity — The strongest reasons for taking Rush are first, to please Pennsylvania — &, secondly, to make way for Clinton to be Minister to England — The claims of New York, & particularly of the party who made Clinton Governor & gave Adams the votes of that state, are too strong to be resisted. To bring Clinton into the Cabinet would ruin everything — Adams, Clay, Clinton — three men less likely to agree could not be found, in the United States. . . .

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

Washington February 23, 1825.

Dear father,

. . . . . .

I called to see Mr. Adams today —— He told me that he had written to De Wit Clinton, & offered him the Mission to England — He also intimated that, if he refused to take it, he should offer him the Treasury Department — But this he did not speak of as being his fixed intention — but as being his present inclination — If Clinton goes to England, Mr. Rush is to be Secretary of the Treasury — He also told me that he had offered the War Department to Governor Barbour[137] — & that he had expressed his willingness to accept it — So that the Cabinet may be said to be filled, if Clinton accepts the Mission to England.[138]. . .

136 Richard Rush, nominated March 5, 1825, confirmed and commissioned March 7.

137 James Barbour of Virginia.

138 Adams mentioned Plumer's visit but did not record their conversation. *Memoirs*, VI, 511.

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

Washington March 2d 1825.

Dear father,

. . . . . .

He [Mr. Adams] informed me that he had, this afternoon, received a letter from Mr. Clinton, declining the Mission to London, upon the ground that his duty to his constituents forbade him quitting his present office.[139] This answer, of course, precludes the offer of any thing else to him. . . .

WILLIAM PLUMER JR. TO WILLIAM PLUMER

Washington March 4, 1825.

Dear father,

. . . . . .

I attended today the inauguration of the new President. It was one of the most august & interesting spectacles I ever witnessed — The Address which the President delivered on this occasion was worthy of the man & of the place — It was extremely well delivered — At first he was a little agitated — but soon recovered his self possession, & spoke with great clearness, force, & animation. . . .

There was an immense crowd of people attended the inauguration — & after it was over the President, & Ex-President received, at their respective houses, the congratulations, & the farewell, of unnumbered guests.[140]. . .

[139] Adams lists Plumer among his visitors on March 1 but not on March 2. *Ibid.*, VI, 515. Upon Clinton's refusal to accept the post in London, Adams offered it to Rufus King. *Ibid.*, VI, 523.

[140] *Cf. ibid.*, VI, 518-519; Ben. Perley Poore, *Reminiscences*, I, 26-27.

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